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THE MAN WITH THE FACE

by

ARTHUR H. G. JULIER

"But the Lord said unto Samuel, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

I. Samuel, 16, 7.

"Their wives may love them, and their children, too, and their country honor them, but there's something about a man with his face gone that hurts the eyes of the people. They don't want him in their homes nor where they can see him.—"

Sir Arbuthnot Lane (quoted in interview).

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CHAPTER I.

Mr. Cobb Introduces Us

MR. COBB, conspicuous for his clothes, his poise, and twenty-two years of confidence in himself, walked unswervingly up the Parkway. Though his feet touched solid earth, his whole being moved in a higher plane; for it was an evening in June, of soft Lake breezes full of the fragrance of Spring flowers and the immortal Barcarole which some pretty maiden was humming as she drifted along the Lagoon, tantalizingly near. Two chains of big white domes, like romantic moons, lighted his way; and hidden in the tree tops and shrubbery, a chorus of tiny voices was singing of life and love.

Mr. Cobb turned neither to the right nor left. Now and then, some person near middle age, paused to look at him a second time. But Mr. Cobb did not fear, for he was the bearer of other things than a serious purpose. A genuine Bangkok sat upon the back of his head; a suit of the latest Cubist's checks, with trousers artistically short, revealing two long pointed tans and lavender hose, adorned his being; and a cane went with him, huge and ponderous, that in certain positions gave the appearance of another leg, so closely in shape and dimensions, did it match the real. He had faith in his tailor's discrimination and did not underestimate the value of correct attire.

However, Mr. Cobb's thoughts were not of clothes. During the day, an overworked telephone operator had

given him the wrong number; and when, instead of the harsh, impatient, masculine response, he heard a soft inviting girlish voice at the other end, he drew in a deep breath and settled down forthwith into an animated verbal flirtation. Never had the office appeared so small and prosaic, and, to-night, he had left the humdrum of life to fare forth with a poet's dream into some wonderful and romantic adventure.

He recalled with particular satisfaction his clever manoeuvre in learning her identity without revealing his own. They had exchanged a laugh over her suggestive name — Mabel Bride, and he still believed it was a wonderful augury of what was to be. Now he had come almost to the spot, her own selection, corner of Fullerton and the Parkway, where he was to meet this dream lady of the telephone in her white serge and sailor hat.

Nervously, he drew out his watch. He had timed it beautifully. So he turned the corner and ran into — a thousand young ladies in white serge and sailor hats and a thousand young men in Bangkoks! The whole street was full of people, young and old, a veritable multitude, good naturedly jostling one another, swaying back and forth, struggling to approach a huge old fashioned mansion that frowned down upon them across the line of special policemen and automobiles coming and going.

Curiosity is a very contagious and compelling impulse; and young Cobb, after learning the occasion for this near riot, speedily forgot his own "affair" and never understood that "Mabel Bride" and her selection of this particular rendezvous was the impromptu improvisement of a clever young lady. For it was no ordinary wedding reception in one of the most exclusive North Side homes that drew the

crowd, and the contracting parties were no ordinary people, as Cobb soon discovered.

"Yes, he is positively the ugliest looking man in Chicago," Cobb heard a young fellow, whom he was later to know as a lawyer's clerk, telling his companion, a young lady also in white serge and sailor hat.

The young lady shook her head deprecatingly and her voice was full of sorrow.

"And she is so beautiful. There is no exaggeration about it. I've seen her picture a dozen times, and once I saw her right here in her own yard."

The clerk appeared to enjoy her discomfiture.

"You'd feel a lot worse if you saw his picture, but that is something you can't do."

"I don't see why."

"You are not the only one, but Mr. Ralph Mandell does not believe in pictures, especially of himself, and no one else has been able to change his mind."

"It ought to be easy enough," the maiden insisted. "He's a big criminal lawyer, isn't he?"

"Not exactly a criminal lawyer," the youth carefully corrected; "he's a corporation lawyer."

"Well, what's the difference?"

Everyone laughed, even the well informed clerk. Cobb was absorbed and had elected himself one of the party by right of position and participation in the conversation.

"Can't they sketch him in court?" he respectfully asked.

"Always has his back to the audience. Always rides in a limousine and has a big black chauffeur who walks ahead of him when he has to go through a crowd," the clerk laconically explained.

"Why, I never knew there was such a fellow."

"Never heard of Mandell, the biggest corporation lawyer in Chicago?"

"Oh, of course," Cobb hastened to admit, "I've heard of him, naturally enough, but I never knew he was so homely."

"He's got a pretty name, anyway," one of the girls interrupted.

"So much the worse for his face," the clerk laughed. "He's going in for society evidently, and the public may be given an opportunity, at last, to view his classical features."

"Oh, I'm with a corporation, you know," Cobb was particular to add, "but I don't have charge of the legal end, so I've never visited court very often."

"Better arrange to come with me some day, and, likely enough, you may be rewarded with a peep at the elusive individual."

"I'd like to," Cobb assented, and an immediate exchange of cards followed and a formal introduction to the ladies of the party.

"Pardon me," purred a little, wrinkled faced, shabbily dressed, middle aged man through a conspicuously coarse moustache — the very incarnation of the unusual in knowledge —"I heard you gentlemen express a desire to view Mr. Mandell's likeness. Well, here it is in this extra edition of the Dispatch;" and, with a wide flourish, he delivered a copy of the precious paper.

"I never read the Dispatch," the clerk carefully explained, grudgingly accepting the proffered sheet. "No doubt, it's a fake."

His doubt was instantly turned into genuine astonishment.

"Well, I'm beat," he exclaimed, passing the paper to Cobb. "Will somebody please pinch me? How in the world did they do it?"

Not even the proprietor could answer his question. The Boulevard was light as day and Cobb held the page with both hands so everyone could see it. Never had he beheld a more repulsive countenance. The ears, while not unduly large, projected nearly straight from the head.

"Looks like a cyclone struck his nose," someone behind commented.

The nose was of proper proportion but bent far to one side nearly flush with the face. The upper lip was completely cleft exposing a row of widely separated, canine like teeth in the raw opening.

"Where's his chin?" one of the students asked.

It could hardly be described as receding. It was wide enough but displaced backward and downward.

"Looks more like a hump on the neck than a chin," another remarked.

The clerk offered an explanation of the deformity.

"Some of the boys think his jaw must have been fractured and the front segment driven back," he volunteered, "but the boss himself doesn't talk a great deal about the subject," he added with a suggestive laugh.

"Don't see how he can talk at all with such a phonograph," another wit chuckled.

"Oh, he can't open his mouth very wide — he's not a good specimen of the purely mechanical talker," the clerk continued, "but he's got a fine physique and knowledge and ideas, all right."

"Looks like he was pretty mad," Cobb finally ventured.

"No doubt he was if he knew what was being done. Must have hobbled and chained him. The fellows at court call him, 'the Man with The Face.' "

"Whew, he sure has a right to the name. I don't see how a fellow with such a face can get a practice or anything else but abuse," Cobb observed.

"He *has* a practice all right. Never mind how ugly he looks, he's got the grey matter. He's rich too — powerfully rich. They all give it to him, believe me."

"I am sorry for his pretty new wife, anyway," one of the girls murmured.

The clerk made an impatient gesture. "You never can tell," he said. "Maybe, she thinks he's handsome."

"Perhaps, she likes the looks of his pocketbook," the proprietor of the yellow journal conjectured. "I read that he saved her father from bankruptcy and settled a half million on her as a pre-nuptial gift."

"What did I tell you?" the clerk demanded. "He could do that and not feel the strain at all."

"Money will get you anything," Cobb philosophized; and then, for want of a better subject, they turned their attention to the house.

"Wonder why they don't light those lights in the yard?" Cobb heard a neighbor inquire.

"Have they got lights there?"

"Sure, the yard is full of electric bulbs."

"Funny."

"Wonder why they don't come from church — it's time."

"The house is pretty dark for a reception."

"The callers don't seem to be staying long."

So the talk went; and at last, as if by common consent, the crowd began to lose interest in the psychological aspect of the strange union and began to take more interest in the tangible demonstration to which it was an uninvited witness.

Something was wrong in the house. No more automobiles were coming and the line was rapidly shortening. Now and then, another light was turned off and the big mansion looked gloomier and more exclusive than ever.

The guests were leaving in groups and only the first floor was illuminated. But the crowd was not easily discouraged, and finally when the last limousine was closed and on its way, the patient watchers in the street came into their reward. A newspaper truck dashed noisily into their midst, and a dozen sprightly newsboys leaped to the ground, and filled the air with their clamor.

"Extra Dispatch — extra paper here — double extra paper — all about the North Side Wedding and the missing bridegroom. Extra."

Mr. Cobb walked slowly down the Parkway. There was no moon, no Barcarole, no music in the air. Mr. Cobb was thinking about life.

CHAPTER II.

Bellamy Enlightens Us

WHILE Mr. Cobb, deep in the disappointment and mystery of the occasion, was trudging down the Parkway, a very unromantic and disquieting taxicab boldly approached him. Mr. Cobb did not regard this alien conveyance, else he might have been impressed by the passengers, two young men in faultless and expensive evening attire who seemed as much out of place in the taxicab as the taxicab itself in this realm of the limousine.

However, Mr. Cobb did not pause nor look back; and in such an obstinate and obtuse manner, did he walk right out of this history. We regret this abrupt termination of a valuable companionship, but Mr. Cobb is young, thoroughly convinced of his own resources, and capable of devising his own romances; while we, more prosaic beings whose only hope for a taste of the unusual must come from the careers of men and women more interesting than ourselves, had best hasten after the little taxicab to the near by mansion of Mr. Fred Bellamy, conspicuous young man of means and bachelor de luxe.

Big Jack Osborne lumbered after his tantalizingly active and reticent host along the old fashioned, interminable hallway into the consistently huge den, where a prize Persian cat and a great Dane, quite as awkward as himself, were racing for the first caress of their well loved master. It was generally agreed among the young folks that Fred

kept house for the benefit of his friends, but Jack always insisted it was for his dogs and cats.

Jack successfully dodged the Persian, ponderously collided with the Dane; and in self defense, dropped helplessly into a convenient easy chair, where, panting from the exertion and furiously blinking and shaking his fat cheeks as he always did when especially interested or excited, he watched his chum stroking the purring Rajah and patting the rough back of Hamlet with growing impatience.

"Spare the wild beast, Fred," he protested, "and let us see if we cannot set our minds to more human affairs."

Bellamy persisted in his exasperating animalistic attentions and smiled.

"Have you ever read the late Senator Vest's oration upon the dog?" he asked looking up cautiously. "I can repeat it for you."

"Look here, Fred," Osborne pleaded to the accompaniment of a crescendo of characteristic grimaces, "you have held me off enough. You have been as tight as a clam and as companionable as a snail all evening. You shook the girls without a word and hustled me here in a two by four taxi, and I want to know what has become of your own machine, why Mandell didn't appear at his own wedding, and where he is now."

Bellamy straightened up in his chair with a jerk. "Jack, you are a terrible chump," he chuckled. "Of course, I shook the girls and hustled you here because — I wanted to talk to you alone — to tell you so many things that I hardly know how to begin."

He arose precipitously with a belated realization of the

need for haste; and selecting a couple of big black cigars, presented one to his wondering guest.

"It's going to be a long session, Jackie, but the humidor is full and I want you to keep awake. To-night, this house is headquarters for privileged information; and unless I am greatly mistaken, for a bit of mystery, too, perhaps."

Jack rubbed his fat hands with glee.

"I don't see how I could get on without you, Fred."

"I can not reveal the present whereabouts of poor Mandell, but I can explain the mystery of the taxi and account for his absence from his own wedding."

Jack shook his head admiringly.

"You ought to be a detective or reporter, Fred. You manage to get on the inside of things so easily. So many people trust you. I envy you."

Bellamy made a gesture of protest.

"Don't do it, Jack," he replied, studying the clouds of tobacco smoke, "any loafer can get on the inside of something, sometime. You are a real producer in the world, while I — well if dad hadn't struck it so rich with his oil lands near Edwardsville, doubtless I would have to earn a living, myself."

"That would be no trick, Freddie. The Dean always insisted that you had the best legal mind in the whole class."

Fred's ruddy face took on a brighter hue as he protested.

"A mind is like a sponge, Jack, and unless you squeeze something out of it now and then, it will never absorb anything else. But, I fear we are digressing. Have you seen this afternoon's Dispatch?"

"Dispatch? Why no. I am not in the habit of reading the Dispatch."

Bellamy smiled self-consciously. "Neither am I but I am glad I could get one to-day. I'll let you see it," and suiting the action to the word, he left the den and returned shortly with the important newspaper.

Jack's eyes did not get farther than the first page, "Can you beat it, Fred? A perfect likeness. Why, I thought it couldn't be done. Mandell and his man have smashed a hundred cameras and beat up a score of artists who were bold enough to try to get him. How was it done?"

Bellamy settled down into his chair confident of his auditor's attention. "Standing gave a bachelor dinner in honor of Mandell, a couple of days ago. I was present."

"You were present?" Osborne repeated, little impressed.

"Yes, there were only a few of us. Standing is very exclusive, you know."

"No, I don't know," Osborne protested. "I've met the fellow a few times but I don't like what little I have seen of him."

"He does seem to be much of a 'Mysterious Stranger' to those whom he favors with his society. He was quite attentive to Helen Verban until the story of her father's financial reverses appeared. Now I suppose he is doubly hostile to Mandell. But to get back to the dinner: he had a devise rigged up to weigh his guests before and after eating — some idea — something like the machines you see at depots and other public places, but his outfit was provided with a chair and you had to wait quite a time for the thing to work. We were all surprised at the result —

that is, I was when I found out to-day what came of it. You see, Standing is in a hospital, pretty thoroughly beat up. Mandell is rather free with his fists, at times, and handy with them also."

Osborne gave a start and his expression changed rapidly from astonishment to incredulity.

"You don't mean to tell me that Mandell punched that big boob. Why, he's a boy, big as he is, beside Standing. Must have been the black boy, Mose."

"Don't you believe it. I saw the whole show. I chanced to be with Mandell when he caught the first glimpse of his own picture in the Dispatch. He is ugly enough at his best, but when he saw that picture, well, it will take a man with a larger vocabulary than I possess to describe his appearance. I believe he scared Standing more than he hurt him. With a gun in my hand, I would be paralyzed before a face like his when he is really mad."

Osborne began blinking again. "Wait a minute, Fred. Let's collect these threads and don't, please, unwind more than one spool at a time. What's the Dispatch got to do with the scrap?"

Bellamy dismissed the objection with a wave of the hand and continued his narration. "I am describing events just as they appeared to me. Of course, you might guess that the dinner had something to do with the face in the Dispatch. I didn't realize it at the time. Now it is plain as day. When Mandell saw the paper, he didn't say a word — merely let Mose, his colored chauffeur, know he wanted to go somewhere and gave me an invitation to go with him. I was somewhat surprised when we entered the automobile to hear him direct Mose to drive to Standing's apartments. Our trip was a silent one.

"Standing was the very image of hospitality and welcomed us effusively, but no one was deceived and he soon appreciated the fact that our errand was anything but a social one. Mandell wasted no time on ceremony. He closed the door himself, and then, a great many things happened at the same time.

"Standing, as usual, made a mighty effort to strut and swagger, laughing uproariously at his own facetious reference to the automatic camera which had worked so admirably. The —"

"The automatic camera?" Osborne repeated incredulously.

Bellamy shook his head despairingly. "Jack, you are dense — just as dense as all of us, but Mandell saw through the thing. That weighing machine was also a camera."

Osborne's expression betrayed more indignation than astonishment. "Poor fellow," he ejaculated, "that's rotten business, but go on."

"It's done, Jack — long ago. Your interruption has robbed my story of its climax. Standing with all his bulk and bluster was woefully outclassed; and I had to call Mose and it was all the two of us could do to pull Mandell off, and that not a second too soon. Standing was nearly done for."

"Any danger? Will he die?" Osborne asked uncertainly.

"I hope not. The doctors are somewhat concerned. Broke his hyoid bone or something of that sort or in that neighborhood and some new fangled complication might set in. He has a special nurse."

"And where is Mandell?"

Bellamy's eyes sparkled. "Wish I knew. It has been

a busy day for him. He visited Standing near five o'clock, and —"

"I understand why he didn't show up at his own wedding and Helen's illness was made for the occasion."

"Precisely. Mandell and I traded cars right after the call upon Standing. Helen may have been with him all of the time we were at her house. Mose has been hanging around with Mandell's car and only a short time ago, I received word that the cops are on his trail. There is going to be some fast driving over in Indiana and Mandell won't be there."

Osborne shook his head admiringly. "I've done you a great injustice, Fred. I have been envying you your leisure but I am free to admit now that you are one of the busiest men in Chicago."

Bellamy raised a hand in warning. The windows were open and in the varying hum of passing automobiles, he detected a familiar note.

"It's Red," he announced and in silence they awaited the chauffeur's report.

Red's business was running an automobile. He knew his place. He preferred the sound of a speeding automobile to that of his own voice. So, he bowed, presented his employer with a note, and slipped away as quietly as he came.

"It's from Mandell," Fred announced. "Not very long, but mighty peculiar. Says he is safe — is not going to commit suicide, nor be caught by the police nor by another camera. He thanks me and bids me good bye. What the deuce does it mean?"

There was only the exchange of a questioning glance for answer.

"Poor fellow, he's awfully cut up over that scoop of Standing and the Dispatch."

"Rotten business," Osborne repeated in a strangely quiet voice.

Their colloquy was interrupted by the clang of the telephone and Bellamy eagerly caught the receiver. His face betrayed at once a happier state of mind.

"They have caught Mose," he chuckled with his hand over the transmitter, "and Mandell was not with him."

He turned to Osborne and winked knowingly. "The police are asking me for information. Sorry I can not do you any good," he replied to the inquiring official.

He paced the floor in deep study and resumed his chair without reaching any conclusion. "Where can he be?" he asked his big chum with boyish helplessness.

"I don't know," Osborne answered somewhat impatiently. "But why all the rumpus? Why not stand trial without all this commotion? It's nothing so serious. He's a lawyer. He ought to know he will be caught?"

Bellamy was losing patience also and began pacing the floor again.

"Oh, that's plain enough. He doesn't fear the affair with Standing. I don't think Standing would appear against him but naturally the Dispatch has learned of the encounter and is trying to make something of it. The office called Standing while we were in the room. A reporter was to come for some papers — something more about Mandell, I suppose. Standing was not concious yet and I answered the phone. I got by in good shape and put him off an hour. But, don't you see, it's that devilish picture, and the notoriety? He is sensitive, man, and not brave

enough to stand the public stare after this. But what does he mean?"

Osborne's face lighted up with a new idea. "He has defended some mighty influential men and has some hold upon the police. There are a great many people in this city who are under obligation to him and would be glad to help him."

Bellamy was relieved. "Of course, perhaps someone right here in Chicago is giving him asylum. He has indulged in considerable quiet philanthropy in the tougher portions of the city. He knew what he was about when he asked the loan of my machine."

"Sure. There's nothing to it. He's rich and don't have to stick around here any longer than he cares to. We'll hear from him — from some foreign shore, some of these days. Perhaps, after all, he realized that his marriage would be a mistake, as it surely would be, and is only too glad of the opportunity to release Helen Verban without hurting her feelings."

"Possible, Jack. He would not want her to share the notoriety."

"Of course. Not to change the subject entirely, Fred, how do you account for this strange attachment between individuals of such opposite characteristics and makeup as Helen Verban and Ralph Mandell? Why, his name itself makes his appearance the more repulsive."

"You would not think it so strange if you knew more of the history of these two families, Jack. Mandell's father was once the wealthiest man in Hawaii — a real Sugar King with an estate and social position that made him the most courted citizen of the Island.

"About this time, the Verbans, at the height of their

prosperity, visited Hawaii with the hope of benefiting Mrs. Verban's health. She had never been very robust. Well, the two men met, and liked one another at sight. Mandell placed his palace at the disposal of his new friends, for the attachment between the ladies was none the less warm; and it was there that Helen Verban was born. Ralph Mandell was then ten years old; and as a remarkable coincidence, a little girl came to the Mandells on the very day Helen was born. Thus their friendship, so auspiciously begun, grew every year with the Mandells visiting in Chicago and the Verbans returning with them to Hawaii.

"During one of these sojourns, a double misfortune robbed this bright Island home of its happiness. Mandell's little daughter, ill for some time, was pronounced a leper; and despite his own honest doubt, backed by competent medical opinion, for leprosy is almost unknown in a patient so young, and several excellent physicians regarded the case as tuberculosis; despite all his financial and political power, the child was carried off to the leper colony, where she speedily died hurried along by grief and privation.

"Then to round out a full measure of affliction, Helen broken hearted over the loss of her little playmate, also fell ill. Her parents were frantic; and fearing to summon a local physician, made preparations for an immediate return to America. Of course, our fool health officer was on the job at once; and putting his own construction on their conduct, quarantined both families. Then, Mr. Mandell lost control of himself and took matters into his own hands. His method was similar to that employed by his son to-day, but Mr. Verban was not strong enough to pull him off, and another health officer was needed when he had finished his work.

"Public sympathy was entirely with Mandell — Helen's malady proved to be a mild attack of the measles — and Mandell was very rich. It cost him something you may be sure, but he got clear and immediately moved to California, where his genius for acquiring wealth did not forsake him; and although it is not generally known, Ralph Mandell, Attorney-at-law, is a richer man than the famous Sugar King of Hawaii ever dreamed of becoming.

"At the age of eighteen, Ralph was a fine looking young fellow, a man in stature, and a hero in fearlessness; and he ran away from home to help the Russians fight the Japs. He was struck down and captured in a sortie from Port Arthur, but he cursed and fought the Jap surgeons — you may imagine how much love he bore for medical men — until they let him alone. That is what your high explosives can do for a man —disfigure him for life, make him an object of horror to his friends, and let him live. What a terrible harvest of ghastly disfigurements will follow the next big war!"

"There won't be any next war, Fred. Civilization has no room for such a calamity."

"But the world has, Jack. It takes just a difference of opinion to bring it. I heard a lady elocutionist recently recite a little poem depicting the horrors of war and deploring the arguments for preparedness. She told us in a few powerful words her reasons as a wife and mother for opposing these arguments. I thought she ought to be telling them to our enemies and not to worry about us. Running a nation is a great deal like driving an automobile through a crowded street. You have to watch the fellow coming toward you and the fellow behind: and the bigger and more powerful your own car, the less danger

of being hit by the careless or intentional bad driving of the other chap."

"You are probably right, Fred, but really, I don't believe many people know this about Mandell."

"Mandell does not discuss himself, but you may be sure that he does not appear ugly or homely to Helen."

"Isn't that fine?" Jack asked with an emphatic blink. "I'd like to take a poke at that cur, Standing, myself. So, he wanted to get even with Mandell because Helen jilted him?"

"I am not so sure it was revenge. Standing looks far ahead. He is conceited enough, too. He knew that Mandell had settled a fortune upon her and may have expected to frighten him away and get the money after all. But he will be mistaken. Helen detests him. Mandell also shared the general suspicion and made some investigation of the fellow's past. I don't know what he discovered but I know there has always been a feeling of hostility between the two men. Mrs. Collins is about the only one who accepts Standing as anything but a counterfeit."

Jack had become quiet and blinkless, his mind evidently active but calm. Hamlet had found a soft rug, and Rajah a convenient cushion. Bellamy rocked softly in his big chair.

"Sometimes," Fred resumed after a brief silence, "I have thought Mandell might not be entirely satisfied with his profession. He is a fine thinker. His speech, of course, is not free, but I don't suppose he realizes just how he appears to others — although his experience with a prominent Lyceum Bureau must have given him a hint of it.

"His first and last assignment was in Waterloo, Iowa, two years ago. The Women's club arranged a reception

for him. I suppose it was inspired by the proper motives for they had seen him that afternoon on the lecture platform. Likely enough, it sprang entirely from a desire to do something nice. Of course, Mandell was timid and awkward: and when the hostess took his hand at the door — the function came off in a private home — he nearly collapsed. It was very hot and close, that night, and the good lady, misinterpreting his symptoms, called to her little daughter, a child of ten or twelve, to bring a glass of water.

"As the little girl came up to him standing there directly under the chandelier, in full view for the first time, she caught just one glimpse of him and, with a shriek of terror, dashed the water in his face and fled screaming from the house."

Bellamy looked up at his big chum with boyish appeal. "Isn't it awful, Jack, to have a face that frightens women and children?"

Jack shook his head and blinked helplessly.

"It wouldn't be so bad if he were an imbecile," Bellamy continued with great feeling, "but he has such a wonderful mind, and loves the beautiful. You ought to see his office. Look how he dresses — up to the minute, but with taste. It must be that every achievement has made him more wretched."

"There is no question about his ability," Jack assented, "but say, Fred," with a sudden display of energy, "I'll take back everything I said about your keen legal mind — not claiming anything for my own. Why didn't you ask Red where he drove Mandell? Is it too late?"

Bellamy was equally impressed. "Red likes the machine better than human company," he replied apologetically. "He is always ducking at the first chance, but we will have

him here in a few minutes. I warned him not to turn in for the night."

Red entered and stood at attention without a word.

"Where did you drive Mr. Mandell?" Bellamy asked him.

Red smiled self consciously. "I didn't drive him at all."

"At all?" Bellamy repeated incredulously.

"Well, not enough to count," Red hurriedly corrected. "Told me to drive to Mr. Verban's, changed his mind half way and ordered me back to his office. We started out again, after a short time that he spent in his office, and a big fellow with black whiskers and a frock coat took the machine at the Post Office. I guess he knew we were coming. He told me I would have time to take in a picture show."

"Who was he? What was his business?"

"Don't know. He was some friend of Mr. Mandell, I reckon. Looked like a backwoods preacher to me."

"How old a man would you call him?"

"About fifty — I should say."

"Didn't he give you any information?"

Red smiled again. "He told me where to wait for him and I had to wait some."

"Why didn't you pump him?"

Red shook his head in a knowing way. "Say you ought to see his eyes."

Red's departure was as precipitous as his entrance.

"Not much help from that direction, is there, Jack?"

Jack shook his head ominously. "I don't know Mandell well enough to make any prediction; but unless he

shows up pretty soon, the majority of interested onlookers will decide that he has committed suicide."

Bellamy made a motion to ward off the gloomy prophecy. "I do not know him any too well either. I have always admired and liked him. I am quite sure he thinks something of me, but he has placed about himself a barrier that is hard to penetrate. He may have friends I know nothing of. He has done much charity work in this city. The big fellow Red speaks of must be a real friend. You may remember what the Psalm says:

> " 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor. The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.
>
> " 'The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive: and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.' "

Osborne regarded his host with challenging eyes.

"The funny thing about the Psalm, Fred, is that you believe it."

"It would be funny if I did not believe it, Jack."

Jack carried into the big room always reserved for him, the picture of a tangle of curly hair, a pair of bright, black eyes, and a ruddy sunny face; and a curly headed child in a cradle lisping his first prayer and not forgetting it later.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Mandell Eludes Us

STANDING dwelt in perfectly modern apartments. The walls and floors were sound proof; therefore the neighbors were not aware of the nature of his brief engagement with Mandell. The attorney, recalled to reason, withdrew from the field in silence and good order. Bellamy summoned a physician of discretion; and although speech was very painful, Standing made it plain that he desired no publicity. He was taken to a private hospital as the easiest way out of the difficulty.

Mandell was driven directly to his office. He was glad to find it deserted. A desk clock reminded him of the hour, 5.30 P. M. For a few minutes, he sat in his chair swinging around to take in every article that had suddenly become so dear, while a wonderful new scheme was rapidly taking shape in his mind.

He was not particularly excited. Indeed, it seemed ridiculous that he had never thought of the thing before. It was so sure and so easy. What a coincidence that the thought had come only to-day! Heretofore, he had ever at hand a certain panacea for his affliction — work — always work; but now for the first time, he began to question the efficacy of this familiar specific with its ten years of consistent study and strife and cold hearted clients.

But they had paid his price!

He began a hasty calculation of his resources. "Pretty rich, pretty rich," he repeated exultantly; and in a spirit of cool deliberation, walked about the office with the impersonal eye of the expert who makes a final inspection of a product which is not to be returned. He sat down again, uncovered the typewriter, and wrote a letter of instruction to his stenographer. She was to have charge of the office, provision for her salary being promised, until his successor should present himself with the proper credentials. This he hoped to arrange in a short time.

His next effort, a card for the classified advertising department of a leading legal Journal, made his misery more acute, but he compromised upon the following:—

"For Sale —Unquestionably the most lucrative one man practice in Corporation Law and Allied Branches in the United States.

"On account of the sudden removal of the owner, an unusual opportunity is offered a young attorney of proven preliminary and legal education with special knowledge and experience in corporation law and the ability and ambition to interest and satisfy clients of the most exacting discrimination, to assume this attractive specialty.

"Office location and appointments are in keeping with the requirements of this business.

"Applicant must convince the advertiser that he possesses these additional qualifications — ability to write acceptable professional articles, ability to talk convincingly and eloquently (evidence of success, however brief, upon the stage or lecture platform will be given consideration), a pleasing personality, more than average good looks, no matrimonial entanglements or prospects, and the courage

to undertake this proposition without the advantage of a personal introduction.

"In answering this advertisement, give full details in first letter with proofs and photograph. To the right man, the advertiser will furnish his reasons for leaving and for these particular requirements. He will agree to finance his successor if necessary, and will offer suggestions which he is convinced will lead to complete professional and social success."

He read the advertisement with greater confidence, directed the editor to mail replies to No. —— South Canal St., Chicago, Ill., and addressed the envelope The Legal Forum (Classified Ad. Dept.), Boston, Mass.

With a trembling hand, he scrawled the message to Helen Verban which he had not dared speak. He knew it was brutally brief. Mechanically he drew out his watch. It showed him the need for haste, and he stumbled out into the hall and dropped the letters in the mail chute.

Once more, he dragged himself into his private room. From a cabinet in one corner, he withdrew a photograph of his beautiful fiancee. She was surely a lovely little being, looking at him from beneath a wealth of waving black hair that could not hide a fairly high forehead; and while this poor, contrastingly distorted creature held the picture at arm's length, it took on the appearance of living reality, and fearlessly, but reverentially, he spoke to it.

He brought the picture nearer, but his hands shook and he could hardly hold his head up, "I don't know how it will turn out but I must go. Think of me, remember me until —"

Somehow, he manged to get the photograph in a large pocketbook, safe in his coat. Then he groped about the

room like a blind man. For just a moment he lingered in the doorway.

"Pretty good outfit to turn over to an unknown lawyer," he moaned. In spite of himself his hand flashed before him a copy of the Dispatch with his own dreadful likeness on the first page; and in unrestrained fury, he waved it about his head.

"Good-bye, Chicago," he snarled. "Good-bye, you revilers, you starers."

Down a dozen stairways, his passion was spending itself, and master of himself again, he calmly entered Bellamy's limousine, drawn close to the curb and directed the chauffeur to drive to the Post Office, where a big man with black whiskers and a black frock coat, brushed by the door with a few words of greeting, mounted the driver's seat, and permitted Red to descend to the street.

When the big man brought the car back, there was no one inside.

CHAPTER IV.

Helen Hires a Detective

A MUCH mystified young lady now dwelled in the ancient House of Verban. Daily, she passed the hours in the single companionship of her aged father. Mr. Verban had never been a man to wrestle with the hard facts and cold figures of business. In the field of salesmanship, there was no one to dispute his leadership. The less attractive executive details of the work he always entrusted to hired help.

When Mrs. Verban died, Helen was fifteen years old at the time, Chicago was fast becoming the great commercial centre which it is to-day. It was a time of easy credit and great expansion. The Verban Company grew up like a top heavy tree, all trunk and branches, and finally toppled over. There were scores of men who were willing to help raise it, but it never flourished again.

Mr. Verban, at seventy, was still planning new campaigns for gettings orders and insisting that there were many years of hard work left in him, but Mandell persuaded him to retire. By what clever manipulation of fact and fancy, the attorney had convinced her father that the threatened bankruptcy was merely the bluff of a few desperate competitors, Helen could not imagine but she knew perfectly well that the proof had been rather expensive.

Standing was out in two weeks, his chief concern that anyone could believe a smaller man unaided had done him so much damage.

Concerning Mandell's disappearance, there was a diversity of opinion. The Dispatch accorded it the appropriate publicity and people in many cities became familiar with the remarkable physiognomy of the missing attorney. Bellamy, who maintained an office and practiced law for diversion, ran across the advertisement in the legal journal and persuaded a few interested members of the local bar association that Mandell's decision, if the card were really his, was purely a private affair. The average man believed he had committed suicide.

Helen decided not to share this gloomy conviction. Had he not written that he would do no such thing? So she set about to solve the mystery herself and began by calling to her aid a celebrated detective. The detective made no immediate progress and she began a private investigation by going to his apartments. The lease had two years to run and the rent had been paid for the full term. Her astonishment was only increased when the agent explained that the remittance had come the very day after his disappearance.

The rooms were truly those of a student. A privately published history of the family carried her back through centuries of pre-eminence and splendor, and filled her with disappointment over the peculiar repression of a man so privileged to take pride in his ancestry. Then there was a notice of his election to the faculty of a famous law school with a carbon copy of his respectful declination of the honor. Carefully fastened to the cover of the family bible was a photograph, dimmed by age. A handsome, serious gentleman of middle age looked up not unkindly at her. Beside him, stood a sweet faced woman with her hands resting upon the shoulders of two children — a boy

and a girl, and the boy was a perfect composite with the strange strength of the father and the mild beauty of the mother.

How well she remembered them! What wonderful ties had bound the two families! How remarkable too, that to both of them children had come only in their late years. As she beheld again her little companion, whose only irregular features were ears set out at too great an angle, a wave of motherly sympathy welled up in her breast. "Poor, little fellow," she moaned, unconscious of the years which made him her senior, "poor little fellow."

Some one has said, "that mere good looks whether in man or woman have never been necessary to a great passion. Indeed, some of the most remarkable love affairs both in ancient and in modern times have been affairs in which one at least of the two persons concerned was not merely plain but positively ugly. Are we to say then that other qualities can make one forget ugliness or has ugliness a certain fascination of its own?"

To Helen's regard, Mandell's deformities had added instead of subtracted. Now his voluntary effacement set her to thinking and she believed that he was more sensitive than she ever imagined and that made her very unhappy.

She looked upon her newly acquired affluence with a guilty conscience. Mandell's arguments had not convinced her after all. She remembered that he was interested in some sort of philanthropy on the South Side. She wished she might learn where so as to share some of her ill gotten wealth with it.

As one day followed another without a word from him, her fears for his safety increased.

One afternoon, the postman brought a letter with a

special delivery stamp. She recognized the writing at once and her heart gave a great bound. He must be alive. Breathlessly she tore open the envelope. The contents were tantalizingly brief — merely announcing that he was on his way to New Orleans and would write again. There was no heading to the letter and when she examined the envelope again, she was exasperated to find only the railway stamp on it.

But he was alive. That was something. The letter was mailed on an Illinois Central train, so he must have traveled along that line. She turned it over at once to her detective. Steps were taken immediately to put the authorities along the Illinois Central and connecting lines on the alert; but in the end, nothing came of it for every trainman on the Illinois Central and even competing lines was positive that no man answering to the description of Ralph Mandell had been a passenger. The detective was not discouraged however, because he had always ridiculed the idea that Mandell might travel anywhere by so public a conveyance as a railroad car. What of automobiles and even aeroplanes?

Helen was disconsolate. The promised letter was so slow to come and before it did come nearly a year had gone.

"Man Looketh on the Outward Appearance"

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Mortell Introduces Himself

THE New Orleans Special was late, there was a discouragingly large crowd at the gate, and one passenger was in a hurry. He would have attracted attention anywhere; and the gateman, professionally careless of the human species, looked at him a second time. He was tall, square shouldered, and straight as a young pine. Dark, deep set, unswerving eyes; a closely cropped black moustache; lips as regular as those of his own pretty daughter; but a chin to delight a man — all this the gateman saw as he silently philosophized.

"Too bad you are in such a rush, young fellow. There's a lot of pretty women here who would like to see more of you and their necks are not long enough. And you're going through anywhere just like you did here. That's a cinch."

On Michigan Avenue, he slackened his pace and began to pay some attention to his surroundings. Automobiles were passing in a procession. Above him, were myriads of new and fascinating sky tints. Near the Lake, April showers had called the early foliage and the spirit of growth was in the air. Everywhere, something striking caught his eye; and the philosophical gateman might have recognized in his later demeanor, a greater security and serenity.

Reluctantly, he turned West on Madison Street and entered one of the newer office buildings like a man with some unwelcome mission before him. He studied the directory and mounted the elevator with an effort. When he opened the door to Mandell's reception room, he was anything but the self assertive individual who so eagerly elbowed his way through the dallying crowd at the depot.

The office girl greeted him with her professional smile.

"Mr. Mandell is away on his vacation," she announced.

The words were magical. Instantly he became a being of power and self confidence again.

"You are quite sure?" he demanded with a challenging stare.

The young lady was not so sure. "Oh, he wrote me a joking letter about selling out a long time ago," she replied rather lamely, "but of course I never took it seriously. Now, I don't suppose I can be of much service to you but if you'll leave your card, I shall remind him of your call when he does return."

"You were not expecting me, then, Miss Dodd?"

She regarded him closely and shook her head in confusion.

"My memory for faces is quite good," she replied apologetically, "but I cannot quite place you."

He was pleased immensely. "Naturally you cannot place me as this is the first time you ever saw me. I have a slight advantage over you. Mr. Mandell gave me much information. I am the poor, unfortunate, deluded, and conceited individual who bought his practice."

The announcement was startling. Miss Dodd was both astonished and humiliated.

"I never dreamed of such a thing — I never believed

it," she faltered. "What is he going to do now? Where is he?"

"Really, I cannot say. I met him in New Orleans, and there I left him, a few days ago. Our business was finished in a hurry. Surely he must have written you, but evidently I have traveled faster than his letter or perhaps it may have been lost. However, I presume you are familiar with his handwriting," drawing a legal document from his coat pocket. "This paper is witness of the transfer."

She glanced at the signature at the bottom of the sheet.

"That surely is his handwriting. I never saw any like his." She looked at him appealingly. "I have no idea of doubting you, Mr. —"

The Unknown did not respond and she dropped her eyes in confusion. "I shall look to you for orders. Here is the key," she murmured.

"Thanks. There is a little matter I wish to look up in Bishop. I expect to take the State Bar Examination."

"Then, you are not registered in Illinois?" she asked, leading the way into the library.

"No, I have never been in active practice in this state. My work has kept me abroad most of the time. However, I shall take the State Board as the easiest way to qualify."

"Of course, I am sure you will find it ridiculously easy."

"You are very encouraging," he laughed.

"She doesn't appear to miss her old employer very much," he mused, sitting down with the book in his hands while she busied herself with various duties that kept him in view. There was another question that required elucida-

tion. She seemed to anticipate his wants and was at his side instantly.

"Mandell must have misjudged that poor girl," he told himself on the way out. "She is not afraid of me."

. . . . . .

"Now what do you think of that?" Miss Dodd soliloquized, standing in the middle of the room, the picture of distraction and despair. "Did he tell me his name? Well, I guess not — not that fellow, and I didn't have sense enough to look for it in that paper, and I don't know whether it was a legal document or a joke. He didn't tell me anything he didn't want to and I don't believe he ever will, and he's got the key and I'm a perfect fool."

"Never mind, little lady," our friend the gateman would have told her, "he's bound to have his way and he's going to tell just what he wants to, and there ain't nobody going to ask him a second time, neither."

. . . . . .

Along Monroe Street, the Unknown floated. "Mandell does not seem to be missed," he assured himself with an air of disappointment. "Wonder, if his looks had anything to do with it?"

Around a corner, a small mob swooped down upon him; and willingly following the line of least resistance, he went with them into a very pretentious restaurant. The place was crowded and immediately he was conscious of something wrong with the service — a waiters' strike or trouble in the kitchen, perhaps. He was hungry and took possession of the first unoccupied table he came to.

"I'm in no hurry, anyway," he chuckled. He looked about him with a start. "Well, if this isn't a coincidence.

The very place Mandell told me to come. Wonder, if *he* is here?"

He began a broad survey of the room and stopped short. Directly in front of him, not twenty feet away, sat a couple of impatient young ladies and their fuming escort. He could see only the back of the man but it was broad and straight. A mass of curly chestnut hair gave him hope. Finally, for an instant, the head turned toward him; and in that instant, the expression of irritation, plain as it was, could not conceal the warmth and color of a face which he was not to mistake even in a thousand.

Mr. Solitaire's own color rivaled that of his quarry. His heart gave a great bound. Had our accommodating gateman been present, he would have been thunderstruck at the change. "Why, that chap must have a yellow streak, after all," he would have been forced to admit.

But the yellow streak vanished as rapidly as it came. "I've got to start sometime," he assured himself, "and I don't see why a couple of petticoats should stop me;" and Mr. Solitaire, with a smile of recognition, boldly approached the table and held out a hand.

"Pardon me — am I not addressing Mr. Fred Bellamy?" he murmured.

Bellamy looked at him a little uncertain, with his head inclined to one side, but arose promptly.

"Right the very first time," he laughed, grasping the outstretched hand with unstinted cordiality, Mr. — eh —"

"Mortell," the intruder hurriedly prompted.

Bellamy was unpardonably self possessed. "Mortell, of course. Some of these days I will be forgetting my own name. I have you placed, all right. Met you last year

at the Harvard-Yale game. Mortell of course. Not a name hard to remember."

The newcomer was very happy. "Easier than I hoped," he chuckled to himself, "but what a fraud he is — met me at the Harvard-Yale game — eh — now I wonder what his game is for I'm sure he doesn't mean a word of it and has no idea who I am. Glory be."

He looked at Bellamy a second time for confirmation. "Mandell was right; that chap is a natural actor, and this is rather a promising situation."

Bellamy, not the least embarrassed by the silence of the intruder, arose manfully to the occasion.

"Girls, this is a pleasure and a vindication for me — a pleasure to present an old and dear friend and a vindication because you have always doubted his existence."

"Not the romantic remnant of that hero race whom you met in Europe?" the stouter of the two young ladies challenged before her name was announced.

Bellamy bowed majestically. "The very same," he affirmed.

Mortell repeated the names after his bewildering host — "Miss Walker — Miss Chabot."

"But his name was not Mortell, you big fraud," Miss Walker persisted.

Bellamy smiled indulgently. "It's a woman's privilege to jumble identities, but this is the man."

Little Miss Chabot turned apologetically to the newcomer. "We never know when to take Fred seriously," she said.

"You have got to take me seriously pretty soon, Little Lady," Bellamy protested, whereat the little lady blushed and her companion laughed heartily and hastened to assure

their guest that she had not meant to question his genuineness in the least.

At any rate, Mortell began to feel surprisingly easy for all the imagination of his new sponsor.

"It's a mighty happy meeting, old chap," Bellamy resumed. "Jack is busy to-night and we have four tickets for the theatre. We need your presence absolutely."

"Which means also, Mr. Mortell, that you are invited to dine with us first," Miss Walker explained.

"Gentlemen, be seated," Bellamy laughed, setting the example to his guest.

"But there don't seem to be any waiters here," little Miss Chabot objected.

Miss Walker was full of protest. "Why, Margery, this is a night of wonderful possibilities. Could Fred disappoint us again? Has he not brought us this real live man from what we were unkind enough to imagine might be a land of fiction? Is it as much to expect him to materialize one lone waiter?"

They turned to Bellamy. He took the challenge seriously.

"Your confidence does credit to your superior discernment," he declared, "and it shall not be in vain." Then before his friends could grasp his meaning, he leaped to his feet, kicking his chair to the floor with a crash. With every eye upon him, he threw his arms above his head, beat his chest, pressed his temples as if in agony, and fell heavily upon the table, shouting "help, help" at the top of his voice.

There was a quick shifting of feet, the sound of more chairs dropping to the floor, the cry of frightened women; and while the men from all parts of the big dining room

looked on in questioning inaction, through a dozen hitherto unused doors, swept an army of anxious waiters. Mortell viewing these strange manoeuvers, first, in wonder, then in consternation, and finally in genuine alarm, raised the curly head from the table, and a tantalizing smile and boyish wink reassured him and made him feel foolish at once.

Bellamy, not the least perturbed, grasped a gaping waiter by the coat and turned in triumph to Miss Walker. "Help has come, Grace. Behold your lone waiter. Quick, girls, give him your order."

His voice carried to the farthest corner, for the time, the only sound in this hushed atmosphere. Everywhere else the guests were still standing and the real significance of the situation came to all of them at once. The waiters ranged about in a circle looked sheepishly at one another. Even the densest could not suppress a grin, and a great wave of genuine unrestrained laughter spread over the room. Without a word of consultation or a single command, the waiters apportioned themselves among the hungry guests; the orchestra struck up a lively air; and the question uppermost in every mind was: "What will we have to eat?"

Mortell found no time for reflection. Miss Walker was particularly interested in him.

"So, you *are* the famous being. Really, I always suspected Fred of romancing — he has a very vivid imagination. I am perfectly reconciled. But I am bound to avail myself of the American privilege to ask questions."

"But I am not a foreigner at all — at least not now, Miss Walker."

Fred held up a hand in warning. "Let us get something to eat, first of all, folks. I am going to order. I've

been studying dietetics and know all about food values and calories, etc."

At this instance, a very corpulent and important looking functionary puffed his way to their table and the regular waiter vanished.

"Eggskoose me, but Mr. Shrontz (Mr. Shrontz was the manager) vishes to know if you vould do him der honor to trink some shampagne mit his komplements und not to pe in too much off a hurry pecause he is daking charge von dis dable, himself?"

Bellamy looked up incredulously.

"I think *so* but tell me please the reason for all this delayed interest."

The functionary smiled self consciously.

"Der reason is simple, Mr. Bellamy. You surely are not unavere dat you haf proken up a vaiters' strike, here dis evening?"

Bellamy drew a long breath. The announcement, made in no quiet tones, spread to nearby tables and was relayed to others. Friends insisted upon coming over and offering congratulations. Mortell began to meet people.

The dinner surely did credit to the occasion. Mortell surprised them by merely tasting the champagne.

"I am afraid Mr. Mortell may associate us always with food and drink," little Miss Chabot murmured with a shy look at the unfinished glass.

Mortell regarded her more closely and truly she appeared out of place where mere food and drink are to be considered. She was all eyes and soul, a slender, graceful, sylph like being, just the opposite of her ample, kindly, less spiritual and more human girl friend. It did not seem possible that such an airy little creature could drink

champagne, but she made a brave attempt and got no farther.

Bellamy turned to Miss Walker. "You see what Physiology in the Public Schools has done. Father tells me that when he was a boy all the farmers were in the habit of taking a jug of whiskey to the harvest fields; and a friend of his, a Baptist Minister, received, in his first yearly stipend, a barrel of whiskey."

"But the doctors tell us alcohol is a poison," Miss Chabot insisted. "It increases blood pressure."

They all laughed.

"I'm going to buy you a sp—sp," Bellamy said.

"Sphygmomanometer," the little lady prompted.

Bellamy turned to Mortell. "Miss Chabot is a close student of the 'How to keep well' column in the daily paper."

"Indeed, I am and I think it is fascinating. I'd love to be a nurse or a doctor," she added, looking away to an abandoned ideal with her big violet eyes.

"You will make a better wife than anything else, little girl," Bellamy suggested with a futile effort to catch her hand.

"Did you ever see such a soft couple, Mr. Mortell?" Miss Walker asked in feigned disapproval.

" 'All the world loves a lover' someone has said," he replied with a catch in his voice whereat the ladies secretly concluded that somewhere, sometime, he had had an affair of the heart which had not turned out altogether satisfactorily.

Their talk touched many subjects. An occasional allusion to the character with which Bellamy by his previous descriptions had so suddenly invested him brought Mortell several anxious moments. He understood perfectly well

that Bellamy had made no mistake in identity and it was rather disconcerting to be compelled to play a part which the rest of the company knew much better than he did himself. He was pretty sure that he was in for eventual disgrace unless Bellamy should have the goodness and foresight to save him. Perhaps he would. He ought to do it.

On the way to the theatre, Mortell found himself beside Miss Walker with Bellamy and his fiancee ahead. He was very quiet. His conduct was becoming a puzzle to his companion. Even after she caught his arm, he let it dangle awkwardly. With a laugh, she bent it to the proper angle and he thanked her so formally that she abruptly stopped him.

"What is wrong, Mr. Mortell?" she inquired sympathetically.

He aroused himself with an effort and forced a laugh.

"Nothing more serious than inexperience, I assure you."

"Then, I am truly proud of my privilege," she rejoined, leading him on again. "But I am not so easily convinced. You are too forceful a man to be led and it seems ridiculous and almost unwomanly for me to attempt it. Somehow, I feel that you have done things — big things — and I suspect that you have done things to more than one trusting female heart."

Mortell laughed genuinely.

"I may be bold enough to think that my life has not been entirely purposeless but to the last charge, I can positively plead not guilty. From that direction, I have never awakened a more tender sentiment than sympathy, I am sure."

"Now then, Mr. Mortell, I am compelled to question your sincerity. I do not undestand your purpose but I am quite certain that you are conscious of your own power and please do not make it necessary for me to tell you that you are dangerously handsome, for you know that."

Mortell did not laugh. His answer was astounding.

"Miss Walker, you have a big heart. I am the greenest ladies' man of this or any other age. If I did not believe you were trying to please me, I would be bound to take offence."

"You frighten me, really you do. I know you are a man of unquestioning determination — Fred has told us so much — and I am sure you are humoring us to-night, just for the mere novelty of the thing and because you have time to kill. You are a very clever man, Mr. Mortell."

"I wish I were just a tenth as clever as Fred Bellamy."

"Fred is very clever. I should say rather that you are unusual. I wish you were one tenth as talkative as Fred."

"What would you have me talk about, then?" he asked resignedly.

"Yourself, of course. Fred has told us so many things about your pranks while a student at the German Universities. I am wild to hear of them first hand. Please talk about them, about yourself."

Mortell groaned. "You must make the proper allowance for Fred's enthusiasm, you know, and German Universities are much maligned institutions. Fred is a natural raconteur. I cannot afford to take that privilege from him."

"I am afraid you are selfish, Mr. Mortell, but I shall get even with you. Here we are at the theatre, but after

the show, I shall mete out to you the proper punishment — Fred will have to racont the whole story of your life right in your very presence."

Mortell felt like shouting for joy but he managed to keep his face straight.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Mortell Learns More of His Own History

THE theatre was crowded. It was opening night for the latest product of a Chicago playwright — a problem play that demanded some preliminary discussion — a respite for which Mr. Mortell was duly thankful; and until the curtain began to rise, he had no serious concern for himself.

In a box directly in front, sat the menace, a woman in resplendent attire, of early middle age, whose searching eyes made him uncomfortable. Bellamy, with a slower sweep of the audience, found a smile of eager recognition awaiting him.

"Our very observing friend, Mrs. Collins," he whispered. "You shall have the privilege of an introduction."

Mortell gave a start. "Mrs. Collins? Not to-night, please."

Bellamy eyed him wonderingly. "You know Mrs. Collins, perhaps?"

"I have heard of her. I have been warned. She is inquisitive."

Bellamy looked at him again; but the play was on, and made no comment. Mortell missed the drift of the first act entirely. There were too many other things to think of, and the knowledge that Mrs. Collins was looking at him all of the time, even though her eyes were upon the stage, disturbed him. Bellamy was absorbed in the

play. His conduct was natural in the extreme. Mortell wished it were less so.

At the first intermission, Bellamy piloted him to safety and surprised him again by ignoring the reason for his caution.

"Why in the world doesn't he say something?" Mortell asked himself. But Bellamy did not grant him an idle moment, leading him here and there under a rapid fire of verbal artillery about everything save themselves; yet, every now and then, Mortell realized that, despite his loquaciousness, Bellamy was doing a great deal of thinking and observing in his own original way.

Returned to their seats with the curtain about to ascend, the ladies informed them that Mrs. Collins had called and they had given her as complete a history of their interesting guest as time would permit.

"What did you tell her?" Mortell asked.

"That you are rich, talented, have studied in the Universities of several different countries; and speak French, Spanish, and German like a native. It has been a family tradition, this international education, ever since the sixteenth century, when a famous progenitor, a knight of the tottering Byzantine Empire, involved in some unfortunate political upheaval, fled to France and founded there a new home. His house flourished from the first and his armour is still a treasured possession of his descendants. The name, originally Latin, was changed in deference to the new allegiance to the French 'Mortel,' and the second 'l' was added when you came to America to preserve the original French pronunciation. Fred has never gone very extensively into the etymology of your

name, but this explanation appeared to me to be the proper one."

"The only one possible," Mortell assured her with such emphasis and in so natural a manner that Bellamy nearly lost his equilibrium. He shot a puzzled glance at his guest which no one saw and Miss Walker was carried along by her own enthusiasm.

"You are the sole survivor of a most romantic race," she continued. "We did not have time to go into details, so contented ourselves with a mere allusion to the various wars and adventures which claimed so many stalwart sons and left you in early manhood with all its wealth and the responsibility of keeping its fame alive."

Mortell bowed low.

"Mrs. Collins was very much impressed and we have promised to take you to meet her, some evening."

Bellamy nudged his companion.

"Your social fortune is made, old chap," he said.

Mortell was very serious when he faced his eulogist. "I cannot properly express my gratitude or admiration," he said, "and now since you have exhausted the subject, I doubt not that we can find topics more profitable than my own unimportant career."

"We may ask a question now and then, may we not?" Miss Walker pleaded with feigned resignation.

. . . . . .

After the performance, the little party walked to the "Old Milano."

"I like to come here," Bellamy began soon as they were comfortably settled, "because you get your money's worth — more than in any other restaurant in the city. Here you meet people who have not forgotten how to be

natural. I like the old fashioned wall paper, the old fashioned coal stove; the proprietor visits with you and the pianist plays what you ask her to play."

"And did you ever observe," Miss Chabot continued, "that you hear nothing but the best music?"

"And why not?" Are not the Italians — the modern Italians — the best living exponents of real music? However, my affection for this place is not only for its artistic qualities. It's fine, in this extravagant age, to discover a restaurant that can be run at a profit just because it eliminates the wasteful, and to realize at the same time that the absence of frills actually brings us greater comfort and pleasure. The happiest month of my whole life was a month spent in a little cottage in Wisconsin, a few Summers ago. I wore a pair of overalls and a hickory shirt all month. I shaved twice, read a paper four times, never thought of a telephone, carried our drinking water from a spring a mile away, rustled our fuel from the woods, caught our own fish, picked berries for our fruit, and lived like a man."

"But the earth is too crowded to permit such a career to many of us," Mortell objected. "Savages require a larger area to gain a livelihood from than civilized man. Farmers attempting to tame wild ducks have learned this lesson, for the number that can be raised on a farm is only a fraction of the number of tame ducks that can live in luxury there."

"I don't doubt that. Civilization is all right but it's these artificial standards I object to. Many times graduating classes have adopted simple gowns because there were poor girls in the class. Why don't the Women's Club do the same? Why limit such a splendid idea to

a graduating class? There is no greater tyrant than custom. We create it and are destroyed by it. No one can run counter to Public Opinion. It did not think poor Mandell should live as other men could, and when he tried to, it drove him away —"

"To suicide," little Miss Chabot interrupted with a sad shake of her head.

Mortell looked troubled. "Does anyone think that?" he asked incredulously.

Bellamy was surprised again. "A great many do," he assured him, "but you seem strangely interested. Were you acquainted with Ralph Mandell?"

Before he could reply, Miss Walker began speaking.

"Oh, that reminds me of something Mrs. Collins said about you, Mr. Mortell. Come, what will you give for a fine trader?"

"Trader?" Mortell echoed uncertainly. "What might that be?"

Miss Walker shook her head and smiled.

"It's no fun to tease so serious a man, and I will tell you, Mr. Mortell, without any bargaining, only a girl is always fishing for traders. Well, Mrs. Collins said you were as handsome as Mandell was ugly and she thinks you have a prettier name, too."

Mortell blushed furiously.

"Don't you like your trader, old chap?" Bellamy teasingly inquired.

"I never thought of Mandell as being ugly," he surprised them by declaring.

Bellamy looked at him searchingly. "So, you have met him?"

"Yes, I have met him. I know him quite well."

"The deuce you say." Bellamy's eyes fairly devoured his strange companion. "The world *is* small. When did you see him last?"

"Just a few days ago."

It was another occasion for a rapid exchange of questioning glances.

"Then he's alive?" Bellamy ventured.

"Alive, but anxious to be forgotten."

The interest of his listeners was very real. "What does that mean?" Bellamy asked.

"You have expressed it very nicely. It's the Public Stare that drove him away. I ran across him in New Orleans. He will never return to Chicago. I am sure you will never see him again, not that he intends to destroy himself but —"

"You speak as with authority," Bellamy interrupted. "I am happier than I can tell you to hear that he has not committed suicide. Frankly, I had come to wonder if he had not employed the methods made famous by the late Leutgardt, the Chicago Sausage Maker, who was convicted of dissolving his wife's body in a strong solution of caustic potash. It seemed incredulous that a man so marked could disappear in any other manner."

"But he has disappeared," Mortell quietly insisted.

"How? They must have been looking for him at New Orleans and his picture was in every paper."

"There are ways," Mortell persisted.

"Do you know the way?" Bellamy challenged.

"Oh, do tell us, Mr. Mortell," the ladies entreated.

Mortell became very mysterious. "The Buddhists' Summum Bonum is oblivion. Mandell has suffered and brought suffering to others. He is convinced that the only

logical way out of his difficulties is a permanent effacement. So far he has succeeded. Shall I interfere with this happy consummation, granted that I could do so? believing also that the price of his very existence depends upon this complete oblivion? Would you, yourselves, care to share this responsibility? I have told you enough to show that I have entered into confidential relations with him, so don't you see that you are demanding an impossible thing of me?"

Bellamy shook his head helplessly. "You are beyond my depth. Don't go any farther."

"I have always suspected, Mr. Mortell," Miss Walker insisted very seriously, "that you would tell just those things about yourself or anyone else that you saw fit to tell, and would make them appear logical and sufficient. I have supreme admiration for your resources, Mr. Mortell; and while I am sorely disappointed to have to endure a mystery, no doubt for life, I am happy nevertheless to know that I have not misunderstood you. Henceforth, I promise to be very discreet in my questions."

Mortell looked hurt. "You appear to question my sincerity, Miss Walker."

"I beg your pardon then, Mr. Mortell," she replied with emphasis. "I do not in the least doubt your sincerity. I do not ask for another word of privileged information, as the lawyers call it. Naturally, I am disappointed, for curiosity is the most powerful human or feminine impulse. If I seem to take your explanation a trifle too lightly, it's because I believe that were the exigencies of the occasion of even more consequence, you would be capable of managing the situation just as cleverly."

Bellamy held up a hand in protest. "For the love of Mike, Grace, where did you get all that language?"

Miss Walker laughed good naturedly.

"It may be somewhat masculine to employ such ponderous sentences, but all joking aside, I have a very personal feeling in this matter. I have always thought highly of Mr. Mandell. Consider what a wonderful thing it was to succeed despite such handicaps and to inspire the love of such a dear girl as Helen Verban. Think of his magnanimity in providing so handsomely for her and then renouncing all possible claim to her gratitude. We may read of such unselfishness, but none of us ever saw it before. I think he is one in a million, and it may sound foolish to you, but I have never neglected to pray for him every night since he disappeared."

Mortell was strangely affected.

"Why foolish, Miss Walker?" he asked in a hushed voice. "Why should we make light of prayer? Is it foolish to believe anything at all? As King Arthur said, more things are done by prayer than the world ever dreamed of, for prayers are to move men, and that is all that is necessary. You are splendid, Miss Walker. I—"

He suddenly realized how far he was going but the young lady understood him and Bellamy laughingly interceded.

"I must guard the interests of my absent friend, Osborne, Mr. Mortell," he warned with studied firmness. Which put a much lighter aspect upon the situation at once.

"I think someone ought to advise Mrs. Collins to drop that fellow, Standing," little Miss Chabot declared, unwilling to change the subject entirely.

"He is not a social asset any longer," Bellamy agreed.

"He's a perfect mystery to me," Miss Walker admitted. "I wonder if anyone knows anything about him."

"Mandell knows something about him," Bellamy replied. "He was interested, for some reason. Standing never works and always has money, the source of which has not been explained. Mandell told me a few things. I got the impression that Standing might not be his real name. I never could endure him. I saw him take a good licking from poor Mandell. I wouldn't have missed the sight for anything. But the fellow is cheeky, and doubtless still imagines he can win Helen."

"Does she countenance him?" Mortell nervously inquired.

Bellamy looked at him as if to inquire "where in the world do you come in here" and replied very emphatically.

"She does not. Of course, she does not."

"Helen will never marry anyone but Mandell," Miss Chabot insisted.

"She is a deep little creature," Miss Walker agreed. "I have never met a girl like her. I am sorry too. She would make some good man a perfect wife, but she is so loyal. I wish you could convince her that Mandell is alive, Mr. Mortell."

"Perhaps that will be possible."

"And you might inspire a new attachment, you are so wonderful with the English Language."

Mortell blushed furiously and helplessly.

Bellamy looked inquiringly from one to the other and smiled.

"I am very much concerned for my absent friend,

Jack," he teased. "There is no stopping you two. Do you mean all you say, Grace?"

Miss Walker looked so serious that everyone laughed.

"Of course, I do. Helen should be too human to remain satisfied with a mere memory; but it would take someone from a distance like Mr. Mortell to interest her, someone who would not remind her of her own past, someone who could show her a new outlook upon life."

Bellamy drew himself slowly to his feet.

"Mortell, there's your chance. Come, folks, it's growing late and I want to take my friend home. We will get rid of you first," looking at the ladies, "and then for a long talk about old times. Come, we can continue this visit some other evening, but only upon condition that Jack be present."

"Don't be silly, Fred," Miss Walker retorted. "I've discovered my niche at last. That careless remark of yours, Freddie, has awakened me to new possibilities. I am going into the matrimonial business."

"That's obvious," Fred chuckled.

"As a promoter, I mean," she declared with a shy look at Mortell.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Mortell Accepts a Past

THE ride home was a quiet one. Miss Walker asked no more questions, and Bellamy was strangely preoccupied. Mortell suspected that he was planning his quiz, and began to fear the adventure had looked altogether too easy. What was his surprise, then, upon alighting at Bellamy's pretentious home, to find himself hurrying up the steps, dashing through a long hall, and nearly running into a suite where his host, pausing only long enough to see him located, grasped his hand.

"This is your apartment, old chap. I hope you will find everything you need. Ring if you think of anything else. There are water and liquids in that little room to your right. I'll have some sandwiches brought in. There are cigars and cigarettes in the case. You are tired. I will see you in the morning. Good night."

"Wait," Mortell protested. "I thought you wanted to talk. I don't feel — eh — just right about this — eh — affair. I want to tell you a little about myself. There may be some mistake."

Bellamy smiled indulgently. "It's possible, I suppose."

He extended his hand again, smiling all the while. "I have enjoyed the evening immensely, old chap." He leaned closer. "Don't worry. I like you and I have confidence in my own judgment. I'll meet you at breakfast — say ten o'clock. Is that too early?"

Mortell helplessly assented.

"Then, once more, welcome and good night," and before he could interfere, his strange host was gone and the door closed behind him.

"Now what do you think of that?" Mortell exclaimed, standing irresolute in the middle of the room. "It doesn't look just right. I wonder what he is driving at?"

There was no answer to his query and he sat down. "Pshaw, he takes it cool just the same. Wonder if he thinks he knows who I am."

He looked straight ahead and continued his self communion.

"He may be a clever actor but not clever enough for that." His eyes shone with conviction. "It's just like him to pick up a fellow on the street and take him home."

He was silent a long time, then shook his head doubtingly. "I cannot help admiring his quiet assurance — his supreme confidence in his own judgment. I ought to be satisfied. I have to start sometime, and I *have* started, all right."

Mortell was young and healthy. It had been a very interesting evening. He was tired. He couldn't settle things to-night, and the suspense began to soothe him. It was something to look forward to in the morning; something worth sleeping for, and he slept.

. . . . . .

Breakfast was a leisurely function. Bellamy spoke of everything but his guest. They discussed the political issues of the day and discovered similar views upon religion and many other matters.

"Would you care to drink a cocktail?" Bellamy asked as a sort of afterthought.

"No, thanks. Last night, was my first introduction to strong drink and I confess that I was not favorably impressed."

Bellamy replaced the decanter. "I don't drink the stuff very often nor because I like it," he explained. "It's a misconception of what constitutes good fellowship, that's all."

He glanced into a mirror that topped the buffet. "The boys in college used to call me 'Whiskey Beak.' "

Mortell noted again his host's florid complexion, which seemed upon occasions, especially conscious ones, to spend its greatest energy upon the nose.

"Rank nonsense," Mortell exclaimed, "you are merely of the sanguine type. I know enough physiology to appreciate the fact that you have no whiskey beak."

Bellamy was greatly pleased. Evidently, it was a rather tender subject. "Margery thinks it colors up a lot more when I take a taste of liquor, and my tastes are becoming far between. I have no ambition to fill an inebriate's grave. I believe in temperance in all things. Some men go after wealth, for instance, like the drunkard goes after whiskey. Old Doctor Thompson had an excellent illustration of the idea.

"He was interne in a large general hospital where, of course, he drew no salary but came in occasionally for a tip. He was happy and contented, getting his three squares a day and a world of experience. One memorable morning, in his mail was a check for one hundred dollars from a grateful patient. A few minutes later, some one else gave him ten dollars. He went to his room at once to try to realize the magnitude of his good fortune, and within ten minutes had become entirely wretched."

"Wretched?" Mortell echoed incredulously.

"Positively."

"Why?"

"Because he discovered three hundred and fifty dollars' worth of things that he had never needed before and there was only one hundred and ten dollars to buy them with. I tried once to borrow a few dollars from a wealthy cousin in the days of my adversity. He had then an income of at least one hundred thousand dollars a year, and was always assuring me and my friends of his anxiety to help me, but he never meant a word of it, and could not spare me five hundred dollars because he needed so many things himself."

"I have never thought of it in that light," Mortell admitted.

"How else can you explain it? The rich are not more charitable because they need so many things. Few men get any real satisfaction from great wealth. I have been very fortunate, very lucky, and the first thing I did after making our strike was to distribute one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars among some needy friends. It has been my salvation. Had I waited a month longer, I would never have done it. I am rational now and not afraid to spend a dollar. I made the proper start."

Mortell looked about him with new interest.

"You have spent some money here."

Bellamy shook his head deprecatingly. "Purely selfish, but I have a small list of beneficiaries — nothing to compare however with what Mandell has done."

He ceased speaking, looking beyond the dining room, thinking likely of other aspects of the strange career of the absent attorney, while Mortell, still waiting upon the pecul-

iar mood of his interesting host was beginning to forget himself, when suddenly he realized that Bellamy's eyes were fastened upon him.

"Do you know," Bellamy deliberately announced, "you look rather familiar to me?"

Mortell was thunderstruck but managed to save appearances.

"Of course, you met me at the Harvard-Yale game."

Bellamy laughed in the most natural manner. "Really you didn't take that seriously, did you?"

Mortell cleared an imaginary obstruction from his throat.

"Well, no — I did not. To tell the truth, I never saw a foot ball game in my life."

Bellamy laughed again. "This is becoming interesting."

Mortell looked up cautiously. "And you are not positive that you ever met me at all?"

Bellamy met his eyes squarely. "I don't think I can place you," he acknowledged. It was impossible to tell which of the two was more embarrassed by this admission.

"I had a letter in my pocket — a letter from Mandell; but after your little comedy, it seemed quite superfluous."

Bellamy was determined not to give more offence.

"Forget that, old chap. I admit my comedy was coarse, but the end justifies the means. We are acquainted now. We are going to be friends. The girls are not narrow. We can adjust any little difference. They will enjoy this thing immensely."

Mortell was very serious. "That's the trouble — the real difficulty. What about that history of my life?"

Bellamy was beginning to waver.

"Of course, you did not take that seriously, either."

"Why not?"

Bellamy looked at him searchingly. Mortell's eyes never wavered.

"Now, I am compelled to make a confession. I have much leisure. I must kill time some way and have acquired a literary bug. I have never sold a story or even tried to sell one but I have written stacks of them — several million words, no doubt — and that history of your life is one of my creations."

"But the ladies believed it."

Bellamy shook his head sadly.

"Poor girls, they have never suspected this weakness, and their endurance is worthy of a greater reward. They are the only audience I have ever had and they have been charitable enough to listen to my outpourings and accept my fancies as genuine experiences."

Mortell studied a moment before replying.

"Suppose," he suggested with some hesitancy, "suppose I should accept this romance as the true story of my life. What would you say to that?"

Bellamy tried to laugh but Mortell was inflexible.

"It would certainly be a most remarkable coincidence: but, confound it, man, you cannot mean it. You are not in earnest, are you?"

Mortell arose and took a turn about the room. Never had he appeared more determined.

"Most people will not tolerate a mystery," he began rather vaguely, "but I have reason to believe that you can and will, if necessary. A few explanations lead always to more explanations. The story of my life has already gone forth. It would be an unending task to change it.

"My conduct so far has been not without design. I was provided with information concerning you. I was sent to you. Doubtless, I might have awaited a more opportune moment to announce myself, but that is done. I had a letter from Mandell — merely a formal note of introduction. I had a story to tell you; and now, at the risk of losing your confidence, I am going to admit that it was not the true story of my life."

Mortell was leaning over the back of a chair talking low, and Bellamy sat opposite, bewildered and fascinated by the strange recital. Mortell looked at him frankly and appealingly.

"This is the most trying and likewise the most presumptious moment of my life; for I have come to you, a stranger, asking for your friendship and demanding, because I find it so difficult to lie to you, that you lie for me instead."

He paused but Bellamy left him no doubt of his interest.

"I shall not lie to you. I can tell you this: I have never done anything criminal or dishonorable. I come from an excellent though forgotten family. I have no enemies to fear or at least none that I do fear. I have ample resources and will never require financial assistance. I do need assistance in other directions. That is one reason for coming to you. Let me be more explicit.

"I have arranged to succeed Mr. Mandell. I hold a diploma from the Tulane School of Law, and my preliminary requirements are sufficient. I shall take the State Examination as the easiest way to qualify. I expect to make good. I am asking two years' time —"

He broke off abruptly, apparently expecting some comment which Bellamy with a new enthusiasm was not slow in making.

"That's some contract, old chap," he agreed with shining eyes, "but, by George, I'm beginning to believe you are equal to it. But don't let me interrupt you."

Mortell manifested his thanks. "I promise first of all to be a gentleman. I intend to work hard, but I want you to back me as you did last night. I want you to blaze the way before me, accepting what I tell you as sufficient and absolving me for the present from further information until the two years are gone."

Bellamy leaned farther forward, dismissing the conditions with a wave of his hand.

"Don't think for a second, old chap, that I brought you here to an inquisition. I am glad to hear what you care to tell me. It is interesting, indeed. I am broad enough, I hope, to appreciate your confidence in me which ought to be negative as well as positive. The situation appeals to me and I have the gambler's instinct. Mandell sent you to me. You could not have come with better credentials. There is nothing I wouldn't do for him."

"Thank you, a thousand times. Let it go as a gambler's chance. If I make good, as I expect to, it will be a great pleasure to pay — to reveal everything. If I fail, I shall walk away with my hat on my head. Meanwhile, I want to be known as Ralph Mortell with the history which you have so cleverly constructed for me. We need say nothing about my professional history. Time will tell that." He looked almost defiant when he continued. "And now if you cannot consistently enter into this affair with absolute unreserve, I am depending upon your honor as a

man not to say anything nor do anything that might prove to be prejudicial to me."

Bellamy appeared greatly relieved. As first, he was disposed to regard the tale as a joke, but as the story unfolded, he became thoroughly absorbed, and the sudden denouement found him the more collected of the two. He jumped to his feet.

"Mortell, old man, give me your hand," he commanded. "You have come to the right place. Who the Devil could refuse a man who looks a fellow in the eye as you do?"

He laughed self consciously. "Pardon me, old chap, I agree with Miss Walker, and I am pretty sure you never consider any side but a winning side and I am beginning to believe that your side is always the winning side. You have cast a spell over me as you do, always."

Mortell was happy. "I am afraid you are a regular Blarney," he protested, "but your generosity is immeasurable."

Bellamy shook his head. "Generosity nothing—aren't you in the habit of getting what you want?"

Mortell laughed in spite of himself. "If everyone flatters me as you and Miss Walker do, I'll soon believe so."

Bellamy took a step nearer and studied his guest more closely. "Excuse me, old man, you remember I said there was something about you that appeared familiar to me. No," he admitted, shaking his head for emphasis, "I can't place you at all. I might have seen you in a crowd some time."

"Look carefully," Mortell insisted.

Bellamy shook his head again. "We often meet people

who impress us that way until we become better acquainted with them. There is nothing to this idea at all."

"You are sure?"

"Of course, but have no fear. This is to be no half hearted sponsorship. It makes no difference who you are or what your name might be. It is what you are and a name cannot alter that. I have given you my word. I accept you as the reincarnation of my own fancy — as Ralph Mortell for two years or ten years or a thousand years. I shall not spy upon you. I believe in you because I believe in myself and in my own judgment, and because I know you must have satisfied Mandell else he would not have sent you, and I believe in his judgment and have no fear for your success, and I am for you. Shake again, old chap. Now let us sit down and have a smoke and lay a few plans for the future."

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The first thing Bellamy did after Mortell departed was to make another perusal of Mandell's card in the Legal Forum which was inserted shortly after his disappearance.

"For Sale:—

"Unquestionably the most lucrative one man practice in Corporation Law and allied branches in the United States.

"On account of the sudden removal of the owner, an unusual opportunity is offered a young attorney of proven preliminary and legal education, with special knowledge and experience in corporation law and the ability and ambition to interest and satisfy clients of the most exacting discrimination, to assume this attractive specialty.

"Office location and appointments are in keeping with the requirements of the business.

"Applicant must convince the advertiser that he possesses these additional qualifications — ability to write acceptable professional articles, ability to talk convincingly and eloquently — evidence of success however brief, upon the stage or lecture platform will be given consideration — a pleasing personality, more than average good looks, no matrimonial entanglements or prospects, and the courage to undertake this proposition without the advantage of a personal introduction.

"In answering this advertisement, give full details in first letter including proofs and photograph. To the right man, the advertiser will furnish his reasons for leaving and for these particular requirements; and will be willing to finance his successor if necessary and will offer suggestions which he is positive will lead to complete professional and social success."

Bellamy pushed his chair back from the desk and settled down into the attitude which a man of leisure assumes when he desires to think with the least possible physical exertion.

"I believe I know why our Mr. Mortell looks so familiar," he told himself. "I'll venture that he is an actor or lecturer as well as a lawyer. I have probably seen him on the stage— the Lord knows under what name."

He was greatly impressed by the thought, and drawing his chair closer to the desk again, he wrote two names, one above the other.

"Ralph Mandell"
"Ralph Mortell"

"Whew," he ejaculated, looking with knit brows at an

imaginary confidant across the desk, "change three little letters and you have it. Our Mr. Mortell, alias this and alias that, is probably a wonderful actor, an excellent law student who has not been admitted to the bar and needs credentials and has to use those of Mandell. Mandell knew he could deliver, however. Gee, it's a trifle risky, nothing short of forgery, but it's easy, man, childishly easy. Well, it's their game, and Mortell might just as well be Mortell as Jenks or Smith. I should worry."

Once more, he settled down into the lazy man's attitude.

"There is going to be something doing in the old town," he chuckled. "Well, I am betting on the dark horse. Mandell knew what he was doing — he always knew, and Mr. Mortell has been well groomed. He knows the ground pretty well — knows all about the bunch here — knew me — knows Helen — wonderful fellow! Wonderful is no name for him. He's incomparable, that's it; handsome, smart, confident." He pointed his finger at the imaginary confidant again. "He's going to get pretty near what he wants. He's that kind; and I am going to help him."

CHAPTER VIII.

Helen Explores

A WRETCHED little lady now dwelled in the Ancient House of Verban — fearful of the curious public and the well meant but bothersome solicitude of her set. She was a lady of high ideals, and Mandell's deformities had impressed her only as they would have in a brother. She saw nothing unusual in their attachment; and the financial storm that threatened her father's house and Mandell's magnificent rescue made her believe he was the best friend of all; and she thought it would afford her much more pleasure to spend a quiet evening with him, discussing some good book, than to go to theatre or a ball with anyone else she knew.

What a wonderful man he was! How deep and strong! What a marvelous memory; what power with language; and she loved to hear him talk despite his notorious lisp. How she enjoyed his pictures of remote and romantic parts of the world! How vividly he recalled to her the interesting characters of history! And he loved her and stood at a distance always ready to protect her.

She realized after it was too late how sensitive he had always been. She abused herself mercilessly for mismanaging the whole affair and making it possible for Standing to perpetrate his detestable trick. For a time after his disappearance, the papers were full of terrible things until it became the general conviction that he had made

use of some method of self destruction that meant complete physical annihilation; and people accepted it as quite the proper ending to such a morbid existence. How she despised the thought and hated a few blundering sympathizers who suggested it as consolation.

So, not knowing what else to do, she had shut herself in this big, cold, lonely, house; certain that were he living, she would hear from him again. For long hours, she would sit resting her head in her hands, listening, looking far away, unwilling to come to any definite conclusion. Little lines began to form about the corners of her big brown eyes, but the dimples were still in her cheeks and a wealth of wavy, raven black hair fell about her shoulders and made her look like a child in trouble.

One morning, came a letter in his own handwriting, mailed at New Orleans. For a while, she held it — afraid to open it. She read it in a daze. It was so different from what she thought it ought to be!

"Dear Helen:—

"When you read this you may know that I am in a world of strange people. I do not announce my destination and am concealing other things for reasons that will appear before you finish this letter.

"I doubt not that my going away will bring you nothing but gain. I never could escape the haunting fear that your regard for me might be influenced by a feeling of gratitude; and I should always have believed that I had taken an unfair advantage of you. This is precisely the thing I do not wish to do.

"Perhaps you have read Maeterlinck's essay on 'The Silence.' If not, please read it that you may understand

me better. You may recall that I never had any intimate friends since I lost my father, and even during his life, he kept me to myself. My education was provided by a private tutor. I read law under the supervision of an eminent attorney but never saw the inside of a law school. I never belonged to a club. My intimates, in fact, were books. Early in life, I acquired the habit of reading in solitude; and as the impulse came, I would visit with favorite characters until it became easy for me to create my own atmosphere and incidents. I loved to sit in the dark, engaged in this agreeable exercise.

"I have always tried to escape publicity. I realize my own limitations and believe the easiest way is the best. A day in the courtroom was ever a day of agony. Social intercourse — that is something I know nothing of. You were good to me to permit me to see you, but do you recall it was only in the evening I dared come?

"For me, there is nothing but 'The Silence.' It is my desire not to have to answer questions. I am tired. I want rest. You must not believe however that my life is to be barren or wretched, and let me make it emphatic that I have no thought of self destruction. Pretence is the greater part of wisdom. No one can look into another's heart nor into another's mind. Happiness is also that part which another cannot see. I have the capacity for happiness but I cannot explain it to anyone else. You may find a hint of it in the Essay on 'The Silence.'

"So, after all I am very selfish for I have considered only my own side of the question.

"I have sold by practice and my successor will soon be in my old office. I am confident that he will fill my place and more than that. He is a gentleman and, if I

may be so bold, a man of very pleasing address. I advise you to consult him upon all matters relative to the management of your property for I have taken the liberty to acquaint him with all details; in consequence of my liberal instructions, he may imagine himself already anything but a stranger to you.

"Now I perceive that I have added another mystery in this Unknown but I leave the problem to you for your own solution. You will meet him and he can tell his own story. He is a lucky chap. He has money and brains, perhaps; time will tell, how much of the latter.

"I am enclosing a card of Doctor Gordon's. He was my outlet for a small amount of charity. You will note that his location suggests charity. The Doctor has no conception of business methods nor any appreciation of the value of money, but a heart as large as his purse is small. I believe that the little hospital over which he presides is built upon a firm foundation but I am persuaded that you will not permit it to come to want.

"This letter is from my mind. From my heart — I could not write. I have loved you, dear little woman, and that love shall be ever with me, the only companion I need. I shall live with it and talk to it, forever.

Farewell,

Ralph Mandell."

She read the letter a second time before she would believe it was genuine, and the reaction came. He had abandond her, willfully and deliberately. She was actually a jilted woman. The thought frightened her and made her cold. With a look almost of guilt she locked the letter in her desk.

Her mind was filled with all sorts of ideas; one of them of revenge, and she pictured the effect of an alliance with the smirking Standing upon the absent and watching Mandell. But would he be watching? She surely would not make such a sacrifice unless she were sure that Mandell would know it and suffer from it, but of course, he would not know it — how could he? She was glad that it would not be necessary to marry a man she despised.

At last, came the announcement of the new attorney, Ralph Mortell, successor to Mr. Ralph Mandell, the celebrated Corporation lawyer. What a peculiar coincidence in their names! However, the papers neglected that feature entirely for the more interesting discussion of the strange disappearance of the eccentric lawyer.

It seemed but a week later when a copy of a local magazine, made up entirely of Chicago contributions and devoted to Chicago's interests and Chicago's men and women, came to her with a blue mark about one page. There was a picture of a man, Mr. Ralph Mortell, Att'y-at-Law, Successor to Mr. Ralph Mandell, at the top. He was exasperatingly handsome, and she felt that she must hate him because he was so handsome. What right had anyone to succeed poor Ralph Mandell and be handsome?

There was a very flattering sketch of the new attorney, emphasizing his early history, his meeting Bellamy in Europe, his acquaintance with Mandell, his wonderful grades at the State Board Examination, his splendid appearance, his pleasant address, his fine command of English — for he had already appeared in court as associate counsel upon an important criminal case which Mandell had undertaken before his flight and made the closing plea for the defence and created a sensation, so masterful was his effort.

Next day, her favorite daily featured the article and there was his picture again on the first page. In the society column, appeared another disquieting announcement. This presumptuous being had taken a house in a very exclusive district, not far from her own, and was rapidly becoming as prominent in social as in legal circles. So she found her resentment for Mandell less violent and herself taking sides with him against this upstart with the handsome face.

She decided that Mr. Mortell should not be her attorney. He might know all about Mandell but she would never go to him for information. Then to add to her disgust, another society item appeared. Mrs. Collins had evidently adopted the new treasure as her very own, and here he was, boldly essaying the lover's role in an amateur play which the busy woman had arranged for some imaginary charity with herself rejuvenated and primped up to receive his moral caresses!

Every day she was reminded of her desertion and this Mortell was rapidly getting on her nerves. There was altogether too much mystery about the whole affair. She could not go to him but she could go to Doctor Gordon. He must be a kind man. His name sounded kind and he was down there among humble people and would not be hard to talk to. She was becoming desperate. All night she would lie awake thinking of so many things. She could not eat. She needed a doctor. She would begin that way and if he weren't a cross man, she could lead up to what she wanted to ask him.

To be consistent, she started late in the day and rode in a street car. It was far and her courage was waning. She had not realized that she was quite a nervous wreck already. How she reached the doctor's flat, she did not

know until she opened her eyes in a strange room with a nurse leaning over her and asking her if she felt better and telling her that she had fainted in the doctor's reception room, and this was his flat and she was in a nice clean bed in a clean room and was not to worry but to take this little vial of medicine and go to sleep; and just when she wanted to stay awake, a big, smiling, black whiskered man came in and patted her cheek and said, "Why she's just a little girl," and smiled again, and she wanted to talk to him but her tongue was too thick and she could not hold her eyes open any longer.

She awoke early the next morning, greatly refreshed save for a slight dizziness which was the only disagreeable result of the hypnotic and soon wore away. She sat up in bed, raising herself a little at a time, for she supposed she must have been pretty sick, although she was surprised at her strength. One of the pillows fell to the floor with ever so little noise but the nurse was at her side in an instant. She was very severe at first and threatened to repeat the hypnotic and in the end forgot that she was anything but another sociable woman.

They chatted like school girls. Helen was delighted with her. The Doctor's housekeeper was out of the city for a few days attending a family reunion and the nurse, just returned from duty, had volunteered to take her place.

After breakfast the Doctor came in. He had been out all night but no one could tell it; he was so jolly.

"How's the little girl?" he asked, coming to her and patting her cheek again. His big hands were soft as velvet. Helen liked him on sight.

"I feel just splendid, doctor," she replied, looking very happy.

The Doctor ran his fingers over her wrist and listened to her heart and made her hold her hands up and spread her fingers.

"Just a matter of tension," he told the nurse; then turning to his patient, "You need rest, little lady. Why not remain with us a few days? It's not a very inviting neighborhood but the flat is quiet."

Helen's eyes sparkled. "I should love to do it," she assented enthusiastically. "I feel so well here. Can you explain it, Doctor?"

The big man smiled again. He was always smiling.

"Indeed, I can," he answered. "The reason is not far to seek. It's the atmosphere."

Helen pretended to understand but she did not understand what he meant until her discovery later that "atmosphere" meant service to fellow men and women.

She was studying the figures woven into the counterpane. "You know why I came, do you not?" she asked not venturing to look up; and before he could reply, she blushed furiously and added, "it's because I'm sick — and — want to ask you something."

She glanced out of the corners of her eyes. The big doctor was smiling but seemed to be troubled too.

"You must rest, little lady, all day. We can talk a great deal and you may ask me a great many questions when you are stronger, but you may ask me one now — the one you want to ask the most."

"I wanted to ask what has become of Mr. Mandell and who this Mr. Mortell is," she faltered.

The big doctor was nervous himself.

"I have a letter from Mandell which offers no ex-

planation as to his future intentions. You may see it. Perhaps that would be best."

Helen took a deep breath.

"Don't you know either, doctor?"

The doctor looked out of the window.

"I don't believe he wants us to know, little lady," he answered quietly. "He has his own way of doing things, but you may see the letter."

She shook her head.

"I don't think it is necessary. I have a letter too but it does not tell where he is going or what he will do or who this Mr. Mortell is. But I must try to forget him, is it not so?"

A big hand stroked her burning cheek.

"Your best days are before you, dear little girl," he said mysteriously. "Some day, you will be the happiest woman in Chicago."

That afternoon, an accident in a factory near by called the physician and nurse away and Helen broke her pledge in less than ten minutes. She dressed in nervous haste and tried her strength by a turn about the flat. She felt like a new woman.

She explored every room — there were seven or eight of them. It was a long flat extending to the alley with an alley door and window in the last room. She looked out of the window. A narrow passage led to the next building. She was full of curiosity. In another minute, she was across the enclosed passageway facing another door. Timidly, she turned the knob and opened the door and an odor suggestive of a hospital came out. With a bold resolve, she looked in upon a dozen cots each occupied by a small figure that was buried in cotton and gauze. A

stern faced, professionally clad woman scowled at her and shut the door with a bang.

She beat a hasty retreat to the flat. She concluded that this was not visiting day at the little hospital. Next, she went out the front way. The hospital was nowhere in sight but she discovered the reason when she entered a diminutive drug store, just large enough to hide the hospital.

Out upon the street again, she learned the nature of the accident which had given her so much liberty. A freight elevator had fallen six or seven stories and injured several employees but none fatally. The foreman, one of the victims, was removed to his own residence and the nurse had gone with him. Doctor Gordon was busy with the other victims and would not return until late in the day.

Partly because she was unfamiliar with the doctor's pantry and largely to kill time, Helen slipped over to the nearest delicatessen and made a very original selection. She was setting the table when the doctor popped into the flat.

"Where did you learn to cook?" he demanded in genuine admiration, forgetting his severe orders of the morning.

"I wish I could afford to employ you," he assured her, finding the feast more to his liking every minute.

"Perhaps, I might work out my bill, if you are so easy to please," Helen suggested, shyly.

"Then be sure it will not be a small one. This is a real treat. Are you hungry, too?"

"I'm starved," she answered with a laugh.

"This will do you good, I'm sure." He arose with a belated realization of his duty. "I wish I could stay and talk but a doctor never knows what time is his own.

I may not be back to-night but the matron of the little hospital will keep you company. My housekeeper will return in the morning. Don't work too hard."

CHAPTER IX.

The Atmosphere

IT WAS late when Helen awoke. She dressed hurriedly and rushed into the dining room. There was a fine display of flowers and fruit on the table and a plate laid for her with a note from the matron telling her she would find bacon and eggs in the warming oven and coffee in the percolator. Doctor Gordon had gone on his rounds and was very glad she had slept well.

She had just finished breakfast when the telephone rang. It was a call for the doctor — very urgent. If Doctor Gordon could not come would she please send some other good doctor? It was the voice of a girl, much frightened, and the patient was her mother.

While Helen was engaged with the telephone directory, looking for a doctor who was not too far away, the bell clanged again and she was informed that if the doctor could not come they would wait.

"No — no," Helen protested, "I'll find another doctor in just a minute. I'm looking for one now."

"Mother is getting better. She doesn't want any other doctor. She'll wait for Doctor Gordon."

"But the doctor may be gone all day."

"Mother says to tell him to call in the morning, then."

"Must be a funny case," Helen soliloquized. "I wonder if it would be proper for me to call upon her? I don't want her to die without medical attention."

Down a dingy little side street, stood a little hut as dark and dirty as its surroundings. Penciled over the door, was the number, 1490; and Helen wondered if it had reference to the date of its construction.

At her knock a squeaky voice bade her enter. The habitation was divided into two rooms. Fresh air was as scarce as the furniture. Upon a rickety old chair, sat an elderly man with long snow white beard and hair. His clothing was made up of so many patches that it suggested an old time county fair crazy quilt. Economy characterized his posture. His knees and shoulders nearly touched.

He hobbled to his feet and made a brave effort to greet his guest with due formality.

"I'm from Doctor Gordon," Helen proudly announced.

Immediately there came a moan and a shriek from the next room; and rushing in, Helen beheld the invalid throwing her big fat arms about, wildly rolling her eyes, puffing out her fat red cheeks and jerking her enormous body so violently that she looked like a huge animated shaking jello. The daughter, a puny, pale, undersized girl wrung her hands in terror and the convulsions increased.

"The doctor," the big woman gasped, "where is he?"

"Why," Helen stammered, "I thought you said you could wait, but I didn't know but that I might do something for you."

The big invalid quieted instantly and fixed a hard eye upon her visitor. "Are you a trained nurse?" she demanded.

"No, I'm — I'm — just visiting Doctor Gordon."

"And don't know nothing about sickness?" with a sneer.

"Not very much," Helen meekly answered.

"Come out of curiosity, I suppose?"

The old gentleman tried to intercede and met with an emphatic rebuff. "I've been a great sufferer for thirty years," the invalid roared, turning sharply upon her aged helpmate, "and I've been kicked from pillar to post and played ball with; and last night, when I had them awful pains in my chest, that man there," now she turned entreatingly to Helen, "told me it wa'nt nothing but hysterics."

It was useless for the old man to protest. He was outvoted two to one.

"But you look pretty well, now?" Helen began encouragingly.

"Pretty well, you say?" the big sufferer shrieked. "You have the gall to stand here in my own house and tell me I look pretty well — you who don't know nothing about sickness and only come out of curiosity! Get out of here, you — you — unfeeling bold thing, you. Get out," she thundered; and Helen, thoroughly humiliated and frightened, fled in confusion and didn't stop running until a safe distance separated her from the bellowing invalid.

"My, but she's a terror," Helen mused, pausing to catch her breath. "I wish Red Parker could hear her yell. He'd never dare cheer lead again. She is certainly mighty strong above the diaphragm. Wonder if she is as sick as she thinks she is? I pity that defenceless old man. I must find some way to help him. I suppose I'm a regular savage but I cannot get sentimental over the great sufferer at all," and she laughed in spite of herself.

She walked on with no particular destination in view. She was delighted with her freedom. She was beginning

to have a good time after all. She passed cute little ragged and dirty children with such bright black eyes and shining hair and perfect white teeth. They spoke a strange language but knew how to thank her for money and trinkets which she bought for them.

Near a busy transfer corner, she ran into a crowd. Some one had been injured, an old man, who had fallen from a street car; it started just as he was climbing on, one of the bystanders told her. They are always in a hurry. Representatives of the Company were arguing with the victim. She heard him emphatically refuse to be sent to their hospital.

"I know what I've got. My arm is broken," the old man insisted, "and I don't need any hospital and ain't going to any. There's a good doctor near here — Doctor Gordon. I'm going to him. Now you fellows get out of my way, d'ye hear?"

A policeman began to disperse the crowd and Helen edged in behind him. The old man was dressed as a laborer with long snow white beard and hair. He was holding the broken wrist in his right hand. A dinner pail stood at his feet. The snow white beard and the dinner pail nearly broke Helen's heart.

"I am going to Doctor Gordon's myself," she announced picking up the dinner pail. "Wait until I can summon a taxicab."

"No, no, Miss, thanking you ever so much. It's only a few steps and I can walk it easily;" but he overestimated his own strength or underestimated his injury for he began to reel and would have fallen had not the policeman caught him.

Helen tugged at the big policeman's coat sleeve. "I'll

take care of him," she insisted. "I want to do something for others."

The big policeman's gruff face softened with the kindliest smile. "That you shall, little lady. I'll take him into the store and you call your taxi. Tell Doctor Gordon hello for me. Tell him, Officer O'Brien sends regards. The old gentleman is in good hands, I'm sure."

The setting of the fracture did not prove to be as formidable an operation as Helen had anticipated, and the old man was quite comfortable after the splints were in place. Helen insisted upon going home with him.

"By all means," Doctor Gordon agreed. "I want you to get the atmosphere."

"I'm getting it," she replied, "and it's doing me good."

The old gentleman was a perfect dear. He was very appreciative and protested that he was being treated altogether too well. "You see, I was late; had some work to do at the house, last night; stayed up rather late; and the old clock stopped and I overslept."

"What is your work?" Helen asked.

"Gatekeeper at the Forty-first Street Steel Mills. I've been there ever since the boy got hurt," and he related how his boy, the support of his wife and himself, had fallen down an elevator shaft and sustained a fracture of the lower spine. The vital centres had escaped. He had perfect control of his arms and body but would never be able to walk again.

There were other details. At one time, he had been quite prosperous — a business man in a little village — until a good honest friend lost his own fortune, and his name was on some of the friend's notes.

They got out before a neat little cottage and a sweet

faced, sunny old lady kissed her man and hugged Helen at the same instant, for Hiram was as sprightly as a youth and boasted that he felt not the slightest twinge of pain so long as anyone was talking to him. They took Helen in to meet the boy — a young man of twenty-four who lay on a cot with a pencil and pad of paper in his hand. He was just the son Helen expected.

"Wouldn't a chair be much more convenient?" she asked, rather hesitatingly.

"We're going to have one just as soon as possible," the mother agreed.

"I'll attend to that," Helen announced quite abstractedly, for her eyes were fastened upon a score of sketches that were pinned to the wall.

"Son's quite a drawer," the mother explained after due thanks for the promised chair; and despite the protests of the modest artist, she brought out several other sketches. Although no artist herself, Helen was positive at first glance that the crippled boy possessed unusual talent.

"Will you sell them?" she asked.

The artist blushed at the idea. "I shall be happy to give them to you — all you want. They aren't worth anything I am sure."

"Let me see, here are a dozen," Helen said, making a selection of children's studies. "They are splendid. I will give you five dollars each to hold the bargain. I don't know their real value. I shall find out and send you the balance."

"What?" the artist cried in astonishment.

"Who ever heard of such a thing?" the old lady asked.

"You're fooling," Hiram hinted, catching some of her seriousness.

Helen deliberately counted the money. "I know they

are worth much more, but as I said, the balance will be yours."

Then Helen was compelled to stay for lunch and they would not listen to her running out for "a few little things;" and she agreed that it was not necessary when "mother" proudly escorted her through the pantry to inspect the wonderful collection of preserves stored there.

"Mother" studied the jars critically. "I believe I shall try the raspberries," she finally decided.

Hiram chuckled. "Gosh, mother, is that in honor of the company or my broken arm?" he teasingly inquired.

"Now, Hiram, do be quiet. He is always trying to show off before company," she explained to Helen.

The lunch was another "dear" to Helen from the moment the two white heads bowed in prayer until she prevailed upon them to let her bake the pancakes. They were too happy for words to learn that their stylish visitor could bake pancakes and liked to do it and liked to eat them. Helen was thoroughly at home. She visited with them, learned more of their history, and decided that this was the finest experience of her life.

"I shall send that chair in the morning," she told the artist, "and I intend to submit your sketches to a friend who is a real judge of such work. You are very gifted and I am sure something will come of it."

They protested in vain and made her promise to come back anyway, and she was only too happy for the privilege.

Doctor Gordon enjoyed Helen's account of her encounter with the "great sufferer." "That woman is a type — one of the large class of self appointed martyrs to ill health. Some people are proud of affliction and would be

wretched if they thought anyone else thought they had a normal appendix or a healthy stomach. Once, that poor old fellow owned a nice little farm, but his young bride lost her health just the minute her folks rebuked her for marrying a man who was so many years her senior."

"I want to help the poor old man," Helen said, "and the girl needs a dress — and I suppose the — 'great sufferer' (she used the term with a sense of guilt but the doctor only smiled) deserves some pity?"

"Pity?" the doctor echoed, "well rather. She has to have it. She lives upon it and as you have seen has not lost much weight; but strictly speaking, that woman deserves our warmest congratulations, for she has realized her great ambition."

"Which is?"

"To be a 'great sufferer.' "

"It must be a sad household," Helen ventured.

The doctor shook his head. "How superficial are our judgments. The world wastes too much sympathy. That woman is happy for she gets what she wants and plenty of it — eternal pity. Her deluded old helpmate is as proud of her as ever and glories in his unconscious martyrdom. The girl gives so much from her great store of affection that it grows and grows until she herself is saturated and helplessly happy. Really, I do not believe we should disturb them. I tried in vain to induce her to undertake some form of drugless healing, for no doctor has ever been able to find any organic disease in her, but at last I was compelled to surrender. I am giving her my time without charge and every variety and color of placebos I can discover."

Helen shook her head admiringly. "Your philosophy

is wonderful. You can extract honey from the bitterest flower."

"Not so wonderful as that, little Missie. That is more than the bee can do; but the bee doesn't have to do it because there is something sweet in every flower and in every experience in life and in every one, but you won't find it unless you look for it always. The bee knows where to look."

"You have the poetical mind, doctor. Let me see some of your verses."

The doctor laughingly denied any such indulgence. Helen was anxious to speak of the hospital, and her abrupt announcement nearly bowled the big man over.

"I popped into the little hospital the other morning and a nurse scowled at me and shut the door in my face."

"The deuce, you did. Where did you learn about it?"

"Mr. Mandell wrote me. Is it in need of funds?"

"It's a private affair," he explained, with an effort to appear unconcerned. "As you might imagine, Mr. Mandell has imposed some peculiar restrictions upon it. No visitor excepting relatives of the patients are welcomed. We never receive big or interesting cases anyway. It is easily self supporting."

Helen realized that he did not enjoy that turn to their conversation; so she proudly displayed her sketches and mentioned her plans for the crippled artist.

Doctor Gordon was delighted. "That's fine. Would you like to do that kind of work down here?" he asked.

"I should love it."

"This is a big field. No organized charity can cover it. You can come here as a free lance, and I'll keep you posted."

Helen was enthusiastic. "I have found your atmosphere, doctor, and it is wonderful. It is making me strong. To-morrow, I shall see the editor. Before I go, I want to leave a little money with you for the old man, with the suffering helpmate. He needs a new suit and the daughter must have a new dress or two; and now, just one more question. How do you get along here — with money, I mean?"

The doctor laughed good naturedly; his interrogator was so serious. "Why, first rate, little Missie. Not all I do is charity. This is out of the high rent district, too. Now that reminds me —" He settled down into a comfortable posture and invited his guest to take a chair again.

"It's going to be a long story. I intended to reserve it for your next visit, but you look so rosy and enthusiastic that I don't believe it is necessary to wait. I lost a few dollars recently. I believe there is a chance to recover it; but whether I do recover it or not, I shall feel proud of the investment. Excuse me just a minute."

He fumbled through his disordered desk and found a dirty, crumpled letter. "Read it, please," he told her.

"Dear Sur," it began illegibly, "that there medicul student haint guilty. the guy that done the work is a swell on the nort side and you know him. He's got the dope on me and I dasent say nothing, but i would if i dared. you've kept sum big crooks out of jail here's a chanst fur you to keep a guy out who haint no crook. he haint got no money and haint no friend of mine don't know I'm on earth but he needs the best to beat that swell who done the dirty work and if you are any kind of a man and as rich as they say you can afford to do this fur nothing. at any rate here is a few

dollars to start if you clear that young feller it will help even up for the real crooks you have cleared."

Helen looked up from the letter, mystified. "What does it mean?"

Doctor Gordon replaced the letter in his desk. "It was written to Mandell. He kept the envelope. Do you recall the incident?"

Helen thought for a minute. "I do not usually go very deep into criminal news. I must have overlooked this affair. Please tell me all about it."

"Mandell was greatly affected by this strange letter. There were two fifty dollar bills enclosed. I believe he has them yet. Certainly, he entered into the affair with all his energy. It was through him that I met the 'medical student.' I shared Mandell's confidence in the young man's innocence. I liked him and determined to do something for him soon as we could clear him of this bad business, but he ran away before we got decently started."

"My — that looks bad, his running away."

The doctor seemed to lose patience for just a moment. "Yes, it does to some, but not to me or to Mandell. However, I am making a wretched jumble of the story. I'll try to be explicit.

"During his senior year, which was about two years ago, this student elected an extra course in operative surgery which was given in the evening. One night, being suddenly indisposed, he was excused by the demonstrator, but it was nearly ten o'clock before he felt well enough to leave the college. There is a dark and somewhat dangerous alley that shortened the distance to his room and naturally he selected this route. It was darker than usual;

and once or twice, he thought he heard a muffled scream; but was not sure and did not feel able to investigate. So, he hurried on and ran into a patrol wagon full of policemen at the other end.

"They were just alighting, and asked him if he had heard any outcry or noise or had met anyone in the alley. He told them he was quite sure he had heard a moan somewhere but had met no one. They asked a few personal questions and he explained that he was a medical student and was going to his room, selecting the shortest cut on account of his illness.

"They commanded him to remain with them as his services might be needed and found a young woman more dead than alive, with a half dozen knife wounds in her body. They could not understand how he had missed her. He helped with first aid and advised the policemen to hurry the victim to the nearest hospital. He was invited to accompany them. He objected that he was not well and could be of no more service. Thereupon, he was bluntly informed that his presence in the alley and his further conduct were suspicious; and there was no alternative but to arrest him.

"Well, the poor fellow was indicted. The police made a strong case against him and one of our yellow journals went after him hard. The boy never had a bad habit and the demonstrator testified that he was ill; but the police were positive he was under the influence of some drug instead, and you know, perhaps, how the drug crusade has affected the public. Meanwhile the young woman hovered between life and death, but Mandell got busy and managed to secure the boy's release upon bail. The Dean of the college scheduled ten thousand dollars and I put in my mite.

"Then, the young woman died."

"Died?" Helen repeated with a shudder.

"Yes, so it appeared — to the police."

"To the police? I don't understand."

"Let me explain, and that is another story. As I said, we managed to get the boy out on bail; and, in two days, he ran away — the day she died."

"Ran away," Helen exclaimed in disapproval, "that looks bad. He must be guilty."

The doctor did not reply at once. "I'll admit that it does look bad to one who has never had to feel the sting of a venomous Yellow Journal. Why, this paper featured the case with half page signed articles by special writers. Naturally, the poor fellow fed upon the whole supply, and the fact that he was so terribly frightened is, in my mind, evidence of his innocence and of his inexperience. There were other circumstances. He was poor and had a mother depending upon him for support. He was trying to do that and work his way through college at the same time. He was becoming a wreck from the unequal struggle even before this unfortunate occurrence. It's no wonder he lost courage.

"Mandell worked like a beaver. I am sure he had his idea of the guilty man, 'this swell North Side guy' of the anonymous letter. Perhaps you may have some suspicion.

"There is another side to this affair that is still a secret to most people. We learned that a certain interne in the hospital was disciplined for refusing to write a death certificate for the supposedly murdered woman. This interne was a graduate of our school — I do a little dispensary work in the college, myself; that is the reason

I call it our school — he was an honor man, I should add; and the Dean took up the matter of his suspension; and the authorities were mighty glad to call quits."

Helen shook her head in confusion.

"Still another story. It promised to raise a scandal but didn't because the affair was hushed. At that time, the hospital was in a rather chaotic condition due to too much political interference and the selection of a warden who knew more about managing a political campaign than a hospital. Now, this supposedly murdered woman disappeared from the hospital, one night. How she made her escape or was spirited away, has never been discovered. She has never been seen since then, dead or alive. The warden was frantic and decided to save his own scalp by reporting her death, substituting one of the many unidentified bodies there for hers. The interne in charge of that ward refused to be a party to the deception and was discharged. Another interne was persuaded to write the death certificate. Mandell was disposed to go after the warden but compromised when our interne was restored to good standing, because the woman disappeared the very night our boy ran away."

"But, there can't be any connection?" Helen asked, half convinced there was.

"I am sure there was none, but the public might think differently. I do not believe she is dead. The warden chooses to maintain that she is; that our boy is a second Holmes*, a wanton degenerate, who cannot be satisfied with mere murder, a monster whose work would not be complete without mutilation of his victim's dead body. You can imagine what this yellow journal would make of such an hypothesis. We were afraid and made peace.

*A notorious Chicago homicide.

"We believe this woman is living and was helped to escape or was spirited away by interested parties. Mandell had a theory of his own along this line. It is too bad he had to leave."

"Perhaps, these interested parties drove him away," she suggested with a more personal fear.

The doctor's manner was very confusing. A better observer than Helen might have construed it as willfully so.

"Did Mandell have any enemies?" he quietly asked.

"I think Standing was no friend."

The doctor did not speak for a few minutes. He was very careful of his words. "I don't imagine the interested party or parties had any knowledge of Mandell's activity. He was very quiet about it, but we miss him very much. He was interested and had money—"

"I have money too, doctor."

"But you are not interested, are you?"

"I am interested in furthering any wish of Mr. Mandell. It's my duty. If he believed this student innocent, I shall believe him innocent; and I will do what I can for his mother's sake."

Doctor Gordon looked out of the window. For a big man, he was strangely timid. "I don't know his successor very well, though I understand he is a very wonderful lawyer."

"But I do, doctor, or I mean that I can know him."

"And the records are in his office. We may be sure Mandell has discussed the case with him."

"Then, I'll see him at once. I'll be glad to finance the work."

Doctor Gordon's eyes twinkled. A better observer than Helen might have imagined he wanted her to meet

the new attorney. "That's splendid of you, little lady," he commended. "You are going to be very busy. Do not overtax your strength."

Helen drew herself erect. "I'm stronger than you think, doctor. I feel equal to anything. Your atmosphere is a marvelous thing. But the young man, the student, doctor?"

The doctor was strangely hopeful. "If we can clear him, there will be a way of reaching him, I am sure."

Helen was telling herself all the way home: "I can see Mr. Mortell about this affair, and maybe, learn something about poor Ralph Mandell. Funny about the names — so much alike."

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Mortell Makes Many Friends and One Enemy

ACQUAINTANCES regarded Mr. Mortell as a man of destiny, but Mr. Mortell knew better. He gave full credit to his predecessor. "The start is everything," he declared. "He left me a fine business and told me what to do with it."

That he had succeeded to Mandell's practice in every sense of the word was very evident. In an incredibly short time he found it necessary to employ assistants. Mandell's ability was unquestioned but his business, from the nature of the man, was bound to be a one man business. Clients came to Mortell who were not members of a corporation or indicted for crime. He was so likeable and so masterful that friends insisted upon bringing him any sort of legal business. So he was rapidly building a substantial general practice, and his confreres predicted that in a few years he would be the head of the most solid firm in the city.

Socially he owed as much to his eccentric predecessor. Bellamy boosted him upon every possible occasion, and Mrs. Collins espoused him with characteristic energy. There was a time, but that was before her marriage, when a now forgotten rumor had it that she began as governess to Mr. Collins' children. Nowadays, no one saw much

of Mr. Collins' children, a boy and a girl, a very splendid boy and a sweet girl; but the boy was attending some preparatory school in the East and the girl, some finishing school, from which she was booked for Vassar.

Mr. Collins was generally known as "the husband of Mrs. Collins." During the first few years of their wedded life, he had been of some consequence. He was famous for two things, his ancient family and a vast unproductive estate in Massachusetts which had been in continuous possession of the Collins lineage for two hundred and fifty years. Here the family resided during the children's vacation. Mr. Collins was by nature a very pompous little man and upon one or two occasions had alluded to their servants as slaves. Aside from his rather extravagant luxury of a boasted landed estate, the little man was a perfect genius for making money. Accordingly Mrs. Collins promptly decided to permit him to continue to make money but restricted his liberties in every other direction. For this achievement, friends were grateful.

Mrs. Collins was a rather big framed woman of the middle aged variety with a penchant for all the various artifices that help such a woman preserve a youthful appearance. She was intellectual and aggressive. She would have succeeded in nearly any undertaking. She selected society as the proper outlet for her genius. She loved to exploit the new and her nature demanded ceaseless activity. She made a mistake with Standing; but when Mortell appeared, she realized a new star had arisen in the social firmament, and resolved to be the first to discover it. Mortell soon became a fashion.

Then came the charity play which Mrs. Collins was directing for the benefit of St. Jarlach's Mission. There

was one scene which required particular and frequent rehearsal. She and Mortell were the only actors in it.

One morning Mortell ran in on his way to his office. It was early but Mrs. Collins would be right down, the maid informed him. He was standing by the fireplace, looking down upon the few smouldering coals, there for appearance rather than for warmth, too deeply absorbed to notice the approach of his hostess until her hand touched his cheek.

"Why, my dear boy, your cheek is hot as fire. Are you ill?" she exclaimed in alarm.

He turned upon her, almost fiercely. "What do you know about Standing?" he demanded, bluntly ignoring her question.

Her astonishment was real. "I don't understand you at all. Why do you ask such a question?"

"Has he said anything about me?"

Her eyes opened in injured protest. "Do you imagine he would dare do such a thing in my hearing?"

He handed her a letter. "Is that his handwriting?" he peremptorily demanded.

She examined the letter carefully. "I would dislike to pronounce on that without comparing it. Shall I read it?"

"By all means."

She read aloud.

"I know who you are. I know all about you. I am not so easy as some people on the North Side, and you had better mind your own business. This is final.

One who knows you."

Mrs. Collins looked up from the letter with a questioning smile. "It's a great joke isn't it and you are a great actor, for I know you do not take it seriously. 'One who knows you.' The idea! Who doesn't know you? Fred Bellamy told us your history even before you came. Really, isn't it quite a joke? And are you trying to show me how well you can act?"

The angry cloud did not leave Mortell's face. "It's not a joke or at least is not intended to be one. I have absolute knowledge that Standing is back of it for this letter is a duplicate of one which I received only a few days ago. Look more carefully and see if you cannot recognize the handwriting."

"Wait a moment." She went into another room and returned with a sheet of paper. It was a list of some sort that had been made by Standing some months earlier. There could be no mistake. The handwriting was identical.

"This letter," Mortell continued, "was found by me after last rehearsal in the corner of the room where Standing sat as self appointed critic."

"What does it mean?" Mrs. Collins begged, backing slowly into a chair, with eyes half fearful and wholly hungry for the revelation, never leaving the attorney's face. Mortell also took a seat and the tension in the room dropped with him.

"Recently, I have received a few threatening letters all signed as this one is. I suspected Standing from the start and now, I know he is the real author; and has furnished a copy of each one to some confederate whose handwriting would be strange to me. He has better reasons for hating me than you may think and what I tell now is in confidence. My predecessor was interested in him.

You may recall there was a certain difficulty between these men and when Mandell was engaged in the pleasant task of beating him up he so far forgot himself as to warn Standing that he was investigating his personal history. Mandell discussed the affair with me and requested me to continue the work which he began. Standing may have suspected as much or may have learned in some way of my own activity; and has taken this method of attempting to frighten me.

"Why does he resort to such a subterfuge? Simply because he is afraid of being exposed. It is a crude invitation to bargain with him. Should I boldly approach and offer to bargain, I have no doubt he would cheerfully admit the whole thing."

"I don't know what he has to fear," Mrs. Collins replied. "I don't believe he is a criminal although he might be an adventurer, but you — why — you haven't anything to fear, have you?"

Mortell looked at his hostess and laughed heartily; her expression was so obvious. "Standing might think so or want to think so, but to show you how I feel about it, I am going to ask you a question. Do you happen to know the postal inspector?"

Mrs. Collins was rapidly recovering her equilibrium. "He happens to be a second cousin of Mr. Collins'," she replied with perfect composure.

"Could you give me a letter to him?"

"Gladly. Now?"

"Please."

She opened a toy desk and wrote the letter of introduction. "There, Young-Mr.-Get-What-You-Want, will that do?"

Mortell smiled self consciously. "You flatter me always, even by this perfect letter."

"Thanks, but I do not flatter you, dear boy. You are simply irrestible. Of course, you do not need to worry, not even if there were something to this attempt at blackmail. You have merely to deny or ignore it and every one of your friends would do the same. No one would think of asking you bothersome questions — for Standing, you see, had to write them. Somehow, I never can think of questions when you are near and others have the same feeling. You are a very magnetic man, my dear sir. I wouldn't be so bold if I were not old enough to be your mother."

Mortell mumbled a faint demurrer and she raised her hand in warning. "Don't spoil it now, dear man. You know very well I am old enough to be your mother. I would not attempt to deceive you. I might try to fool others — perhaps I do, but you," she shook her head knowingly, "not you."

Mortell blushed and she hastened on.

"I really believe, nevertheless, that you are a veritable tyro in love making. That is the only thing you seem to fear. That's the reason for your role in our play. You need practice. Some day, Helen Verban will emerge from her retreat, and I want you to be ready for her."

Mortell gave a start. Mrs. Collins was quick to mark his discomfiture.

"Ah — hah," she ejaculated, "you couldn't wait for me to introduce you. You know her, already?"

Mortell affected a smile. "Guess again. I have not met her and I wonder why. We just naturally shall have to meet. There is a little matter of business that requires it."

"You seem to be disappointed."

"I am looking for business."

"And Helen?"

Mortell lost interest immediately. It was a privilege of his to change subjects abruptly. "Now, please be careful about what I told you," he warned. "Something is going to drop pretty soon and it will make a big splash. I don't want any mud to hit you."

Mrs. Collins was all attention. "You refer to Standing?"

"Good guess. This fellow is an adventurer, and these letters confirm an original suspicion."

"You mean that he is a criminal?"

Mortell smiled indulgently. "You may rest assured, dear lady, that our friend is doomed to disappointment. I do not believe that he is deputized by the Unseen Controller of Human Destinies to change the channel of life that has been laid out for me to follow; and I will fight him any way he comes; and I may not wait for him to come either, for I can silence him any moment I care to do it but he cannot silence me."

Mrs. Collins was fearful. "But he is a giant."

"Bah for the giant part. He is a coward. I would fear him only in the dark."

Mrs. Collins' eyes were full of admiration. "I do not doubt your capabilities in any direction. I don't believe anyone would fight you, whom you could look in the eye; but you will be careful, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, I'll be careful and now," going to the door, "you will remember this is confidential and whatever is to happen will be the better for waiting."

"Your word is my law, dear man," she assured him. "Rehearsal to-night, at your house?"

"Yes."

"Then good bye and be careful."

"Thank you."

She watched him walk rapidly down the Boulevard. "He is wrong," she told herself, "Standing must have a certain courage to even think of threatening him."

She went back to a big soft rocker and tried to reason about all the strange things he had hinted at. She wondered why she had let him go with only a hint of what he might have told her, but that was always the way with him. He never did tell more than he wanted to, and could always go on mystifying people and no one dared ask him about it. She could make nothing of the whole affair, but she knew she would respect his confidence. No one violated Mr. Mortell's confidence.

CHAPTER XI.

There is Always a Way to Get Around

A HAPPY little lady now dwelled in the Ancient House of Verban. A chair went forthwith to the crippled artist, and she called upon the editor and submitted the sketches. He summoned the Art Editor and they examined the work with professional impartiality.

"How much did you pay for them?" the Art Editor asked.

"Sixty dollars," Helen answered, uncertain which way their verdict might turn.

"Sixty dollars?" he exclaimed. "We need you on our staff, Miss Verban. They are unusual — cheap at a thousand. Look," he cried, regrouping them upon the wall with this title above them: "The Little World."

"Great," his colleague applauded.

He turned to Helen. His face was actually pale. "Send that man to me. It's pure luck to get such a chance. I'll help him make a fortune, and boost our magazine, too."

It was more than the little lady expected; but she faltered through the story of the wonderful cripple, and the editor promised to see him next day.

"Don't worry about him another minute," he told her. "He does not need any help. So long as he can use his eyes and hands, he is assured of a generous income. Don't you see we owe the boy a thousand dollars, already?"

Helen waited a whole day and then rushed down to the

little South Side cottage. The door was open before she touched the threshold, and the minute she set foot within, she knew the editor had been there and it was not a dream after all.

The artist wheeled himself to her. "I can't work to-day, dear lady. I simply cannot," he repeated. "I am too excited. I have loads of work laid out but the editor forbade me to do anything for a whole week, so I have been riding around in this chair and having the time of my life. Some day, I will try to thank you for what you have done. The Editor tells me there is no doubt about my future. He says it is here now. I showed him all of my sketches and made one for him while he sat watching me, and he was wonderfully nice and flattered me until my ears roared. We are so upset that we don't know what to do."

Hiram came in with a basket full of packages. "Why the little lady has her hat on yet, mother," he protested.

Helen removed her hat and laughed. "So that's what you are up to," examining the packages, "going to celebrate are you?"

"Yes, and you were invited but I suppose you started before the letter reached you."

"Now, dear, you sit right down where you are," Mother insisted, pushing Helen into a chair. "You are the official guest of the whole family. I'm not educated and can't make a fine speech, so I am not going to try, but if an old woman's prayers can be felt, your dear little ears will ring every night as long as I live.

"This editor seems to think we are going to have an easy time; and, would you believe it, he made our boy take an awful big check and has guaranteed him a regular

salary as member of the staff on his magazine. Isn't it strange that none of us ever dreamed such a thing could be done?"

"There will always be a reward for genuine talent," Helen answered, "and your son has that. There must be a great deal of talent lost to the world just through lack of the opportunity to show it."

"It seems so strange to me," the sweet little mother replied in her wonderful, soft voice, "that my poor boy is so much more valuable to the world in his helpless condition. If he had not fallen down that shaft, he would be working yet on a mechanic's wage; and we would be scolding him for wasting his evenings on useless drawings instead of reading a good book or going to a moving picture show. I can't get over it at all, thinking how ignorant Hiram and I must be."

"Pshaw, mother," the artist said, "you make too much of my helplessness. I'm not so bad off. See how I've been tearing around the house to-day. To-morrow, I am going on the street. I don't care about this walking business. There's always a way to get around without legs. I might just as well tell you now as later, but I was saving it for a surprise, I've bought an automobile."

"Bought an automobile?" his mother repeated in perfect amazement. "Of all things: why, automobiles cost a lot of money."

"That's a fact, but the editor says I am to have a fine room of my own in the building and there is no need of being shut up here or anywhere else, and I can get around as well as the next man, for every one who amounts to anything owns an automobile and don't use his legs, especially in a big city like Chicago.

"He is going to lend me the money and of course it's to be an electric. He says it can be fixed so I can run it just as well as Edison, and Pop and you can run it and all of us have the use of it. He says I can afford it just as much as he can, and he owns one. So it's done and it is coming to-morrow. He wants me to practice with it this week. That's the reason for my layoff. A demonstrator will be with me until I feel sure of myself. So you see, mother, it's all the way you look at things."

"God is good, darling boy," she murmured, covering her eyes. "My boy — my wonderful boy!"

"Everything is always right," Hiram declared. "If I hadn't broken my arm, this little lady wouldn't have done all these wonderful things for us; for she wouldn't have known us."

He turned to his wife, purposely ignoring her efforts to master her emotion. "Now, if something could happen to you, Mother, this little miracle worker might prove that I'm a great inventor and had discovered perpetual motion."

Mother tried to appear scandalized but had to laugh in spite of herself. "Did you ever see such a man?" she asked Helen.

Hiram chuckled self consciously. "Guess I've got a right to feel proud of this arm. What do you suppose would have happened if I had broken a leg?"

"Now Hiram, I want you to stop that foolishness. It is sinful to joke about such things."

"I feel too good to be serious, Mother. Come, can't you be just a little more pleasant, yourself?"

Everyone laughed even though Mother threatened to box Hiram's ears.

Helen was profoundly impressed by the editor's gene-

rosity; and it made her uncomfortably self conscious, when she compared the new "atmosphere" as Doctor Gordon so aptly expressed it with the old atmosphere of her own neighborhood, and contrasted the life of this editor, a plain man of business, as he had hitherto appeared to her, with the purposeless careers of the young men of her own set — Standing, for instance. But she was enjoying the occasion. They made so much of her and the tiny, grey haired Mother adopted her as her own. They kept her all day and then led her into a bright little room full of the fragrance of clean linens — her own room, they called it — and all night fairies watched over her bed.

CHAPTER XII.

An Explanation for Everything

MRS. COLLINS could not approve of Helen's retirement and held it as her duty to see her regularly. She was with her the day after Helen's wonderful visit to the South Side.

"I envy you, dear girl. You are so free. Some day, you shall take me with you."

"I firmly believe half of us never learn the real significance of life," Helen replied, unconscious of her assumption of so much wisdom. "We never leave our own, fenced in, little set; but it's the whole world that's outside."

Mrs. Collins shook her head wonderingly. "What a thorough little philosopher you are. You make me feel dreadfully inconsequential."

Mrs. Collins was very earnest and Helen's eyes were still in the clouds. "Some day, I will take you, Madge. I want you to meet a remarkable man, Doctor Gordon. But tell me, are you satisfied with yourself, are you truly happy?"

The elder woman was startled. "That's a large question, dear." She was silent for many minutes. She did not smile. This bold question brought her nearer to a realization of her own limitations. Then she did a strange thing. Helen found herself nearly crushed in the strong woman's arms.

"You amazing child," she crooned — there were tears

in her eyes. "We must not spoil this," she cried, slowly releasing her. "I must go now — to think of so many things. I'll come back soon," and before Helen realized her purpose, her visitor was gone.

Helen sat still ever so long with her mind full of grave questions. Gradually she began to feel her own importance. She was a discoverer. There was something mystical about her new responsibilities. Then she thought of her impending interview with the attorney. She wanted to forget some things and he would recall them to her but the time to act had come. But her courage was not equal to the test — to-day.

So it was only on the morning that Mortell called upon Mrs. Collins that she went to his office. He had not been there a half hour before a card was thrust through the door with Helen's name on it. He held it out at arm's length as though it were a thing to be feared. He knew it had to come, for that was his chief purpose — to meet her. And now she was here, separated from him by only a door, and while he sat there gathering his wits, he was thankful for that door. There were many things to discuss with her, business affairs purely, and a life insurance policy of Ralph Mandell's. He pounced upon it greedily and pressed the bell.

Helen's first impression was that he was very handsome and very nervous; and he, beyond awkwardly indicating a chair for his pretty client, saw nothing at first but that important life insurance policy.

"I am very glad you called," he mumbled with a cautious glance. "Indeed, I was about to ask you to come."

She was tantalizingly quiet.

"I was wondering if you found any difficulty in man-

aging your affairs," he continued, hiding behind the paper.

She didn't appear to hear him and made no response.

"Of course, Mr. Mandell acquainted me with the details, and I know he made things easy for you. In fact, you wouldn't have need for an attorney's services unless you contemplated making some complicated investment, and — Oh, yes, this policy has two years to run, and has been —"

He was wondering why she didn't speak; and when he finally mustered up the courage to look at her again, he was more uncomfortable than ever. She was making a losing fight. Her lips would not stay still and big tears were running down her cheeks.

Mortell was helpless. "What have I done? what have I said? I'll step out a minute."

She shook her head. "No, don't do that. It's not you." She dried her eyes and tried to smile. "I have behaved terribly. I was thinking —" and she broke down again.

Mortell knew he ought to say something but he couldn't; and when she looked at him again he was so bewildered that she had to smile.

"What were you thinking of?" he finally asked.

"I was thinking of Mr. Mandell and of — you. He has gone, no one knows where and no one cares, and you are here, doing all he ever did, better known, and better liked."

Mortell flushed self consciously. "I claim nothing for myself. I try only to continue his work as he showed it to me."

Helen liked this speech. "No, no, Mr. Mortell," she protested, "that is unjust to you. I spoke without thought.

Forgive me. You seem strangely familiar to me, else I should not have been so free. I am sure you deserve your success."

Mortell blushed furiously, and Helen, becoming suddenly so much older and more experienced, beheld in him only the struggling young lawyer. If it were his purpose to get what poor Mandell could not have, he was unconsciously making a splendid beginning.

"And I am glad you have so many friends," she added, "because that's the way you get your business, is it not?"

"Ye —es," he drawled, not entirely at ease.

"Some people make friends just naturally," she explained. "Now here I am — why, I had determined that I wouldn't like you at all."

She bit her lips, suddenly conscious of her embarrassing admission. Mortell's good angel must have told him what to say.

"I owe everything to my predecessor," he quietly declared, hiding his traitorous eyes behind a convenient document.

"Do you know him very well?" she asked, too interested to catch his purpose.

"As well as anyone could know him."

"I have thought of this strange case until I cannot make anything of it."

Mortell spoke only louder than a whisper. "It is better not to try. I am sure Mandell does not want us to make him a problem, and seeks only to be forgotten."

She turned upon him sharply. "That's what Doctor Gordon said. Does everyone believe that?"

"They must."

"He sent you here."

"He hoped I could drop in without making much noise. He sent me to do certain things," Mortell explained.

"And you had met Mr. Bellamy before?"

"Oh yes, I knew him well."

"And knew all about me?"

Mortell laughed. "Not all, just what he told me — just enough to make me want to know more."

Helen shook her head helplessly. "It is very mysterious, even though you and Doctor Gordon pretend that it is not. You say he wants only to be let alone. Who will let him alone? It's against human nature to neglect a mystery. Now there is your long visit with him in New Orleans and this letter to me in his own handwriting, I'm positive, and yet not a single policeman or detective or anyone else has caught a glimpse of him since he left Chicago. He must have some very resourceful confederates."

Mortell looked at her quite his usual confident self again. "That is possible. Do not place too much reliance upon detectives and policemen. There was a case in Chicago, some years ago; I remember it as a matter of criminal history. I refer to the disappearance of Willie Tascott. You recall the case?"

"Yes, he was accused of murdering a millionaire."

"Exactly. His description was complete. A large reward was offered for his capture; and yet, after all these years, nothing has been seen of him, dead or alive. Was it confederates or just a clever individual against rather stupid policemen and detectives?"

"I'm sure I don't know," Helen replied hesitatingly. "I never thought of it in that way."

"Of course, there is an explanation for everything

and there is an explanation for Mandell's disappearance, but evidently he does not think it is any of our business."

Helen winced. "Perhaps that is true but he was so good and dear to me that I cannot forget him nor what he has done and I pray he may find happiness at last."

Mortell was very solemn. "I am sure he will find it," he murmured.

At that instant, a half dozen cards shot into the room. Helen awoke to the reason for her visit at once.

"I have been very thoughtless, Mr. Mortell. I should not have taken so much of your time."

Mortell dropped the cards into his pocket without looking at them. "They will wait. No hurry at all."

"But I came to see you about a case and I have been here so long that — I will call again."

"I hope you will, but you are not going to be hurried now. Just take all the time you want and tell me about this case in your own way."

Thereupon she related the facts just as Doctor Gordon had told them to her. There was a merry twinkle in the lawyer's eyes which she did not see.

"That was one of the reasons that Mandell wanted me to come here," he told her, "and I have not forgotten it. Don't you see this case emphasizes what I said about incompetent police. We have two mysterious disappearances — the student and the woman whom he is accused of murdering."

"That's true," Helen acknowledged.

"We have made slow progress. Mandell's departure set things back a year. I have called in a new detective and we feel certain this woman is not in Chicago."

"So, you believe she did not die?"

"I'm sure she did not. You can find a dead body easy enough: not always a live one. I am working upon the theory that she stood in some one's way — her husband's perhaps. He left her for dead and so far as he ever learned she did die, and he was free to go on with his venture whatever it was. I think I know who and what but do not care to commit myself just yet. Naturally this woman is not anxious to disabuse him of his delusion. Her safety demands silence.

"She is hiding somewhere. The neighborhood where she resided and where the crime was committed indicates that she was in straitened circumstances. Nevertheless, she may have wealthy relatives or friends. We believe we can lay our hands upon the man but may have to enlarge our operations to cover the entire United States before we find the woman. At present, we are investigating the histories of abandoned wives, divorce records, common law marriages, etc. We have as you see, undertaken a big job but we have faith in our reasoning.

"You may wonder why we are so sure of this theory. We have some good reasons. First of all, that anonymous letter. In Mandell's mind, there was no doubt as to whom it referred. This fellow was very busy for a time. Certain of his schemes miscarried badly. They fit in with other reasons. Recently I have received threatening letters. I am satisfied I know the author and understand his purpose. They are lucky letters to us. This is the old story of the detection of criminals — just such a thoughtless impulse as the writing of these letters. I believe that at last we are upon the right track."

The little lady's big eyes were full of wonder and admiration.

"I am so glad I came here, Mr. Mortell. Frankly, I had some doubt of the young man's innocence even after all Doctor Gordon said for him. Now I am convinced. You are very convincing, Mr. Mortell. Lawyers have to be, of course."

There was just one thing Mortell could think of that instant. Cupid was in his office but he was afraid to trust him. He felt his face burning hot and hid behind another document.

Helen missed the meaning of his strange conduct altogether, she was so full of the affair. "There must be considerable expense to work of this nature," she continued. "That's to be my share in it."

Mortell dropped the paper instantly. "Oh, that will be easy to arrange," he agreed. "There is nothing like team work. Of course, we shall have to be careful and keep our own counsels. We must not use the telephone to discuss the case, so I shall expect to see you from time to time. If anything unusual develops, could I — eh — call upon you, some evening?"

Helen hesitated a minute. He knew the reason but her answer rectified that entirely.

"I shall be home every Thursday evening," she told him without looking up.

"Next Thursday?" he asked, surer of the unusual developments than of her answer.

"Yes," she said, arising to depart.

The "yes" was very low but he would have heard it had it been the faintest whisper. "It's a beginning," he assured himself after she had gone. He sat down oblivious to an office full of waiting clients, with his head propped upon his hands and a look of great happiness in his eyes.

Another card shot into the room and brought him back to earth. He telephoned Bellamy to bring the crowd to rehearsal at his house, and made him promise to take dinner with him at the club. Then he jotted down in his memo an appointment with the postal inspector for four thirty that afternoon; and work began.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Boldest Stroke is the Safest

BELLAMY was sitting behind a screen of afternoon Dailies in the farthest corner of the dining room when Mortell arrived at the Club.

"Are you reading or hiding?" the attorney asked, dropping into a chair across from his submerged friend.

The paper dropped instantly; and a studious, serious, red face bore down upon the unsuspecting attorney. "It has already cost a dollar and the friendship of a dozen good fellows to keep this corner private."

Mortell looked up questioningly. "Bad as that? I'd offer to compensate you but I know you have more money than you can spend and more friends than one man needs. But why so grouchy? Let the good fellows join us. It's my buy."

Bellamy shook his head hopelessly. "Nobody at home upstairs," he complained. "Now, listen, I've something to tell you."

Mortell feigned surprise. "I have two ears," he replied.

Bellamy shifted about and crossed his legs several ways. The news was evidently important.

"The police are watching your friend, Standing," he finally announced, leaning over the table with the weight of his message. "He couldn't get out of Chicago if he tried."

Mortell gave a start. He knew Bellamy had some sort of honorary connection with the police department, and the announcement seemed anything but welcome.

"The detectives are rounding up a gang in the freight yards of the Northwestern Railroad —"

"Railroad?" Mortell repeated incredulously.

"Sure thing," Bellamy continued. "There is no question about the gang, but the case against Standing is not complete. Somebody has put him on his guard, but the police are waiting. There is a head to the gang — a man of brains. The police are pretty sure Standing is the man — sure enough to nab him, should he attempt to get away. Furthermore, you may recall a few burglaries that followed certain conspicuous North Side functions. Standing was a guest upon each occasion."

Bellamy leaned back in his chair, seemingly, easier for being rid of the information.

"Poor Mrs. Collins," he resumed. "What a splash there'll be on the North Side one of these days! We have got to give it to that chap. His nerve is Titanic."

Mortell was silent a few minutes. His lack of enthusiasm was disappointing to Bellamy.

"Have the police any new ideas about the medical student?" he asked.

Bellamy shook his head. "I don't believe Standing would commit murder."

"Which answers my question very nicely. I am firmer in this belief than ever. Why is Standing writing these threatening letters?"

"Oh, you have interfered with his social progress, you know."

Mortell snapped his fingers in disgust. "Standing

knows more than you think. He knows I am after him and he thinks he knows who I am and —" Bellamy's eyes closed to a narrow slit, "I don't doubt at all, he does know who I am."

Bellamy was astounded. In vain he tried to hide the vanishing hope in his eyes. Mortell was not deceived and raised a warning hand. "Not yet, Fred. It's not time. It's not two years yet."

"Oh, I'm not asking you," Bellamy interrupted with some embarrassment, "you are doing all the talking. You say Standing knows who you are and all the time you are doing your worst to make him tell it. Why don't you let up on him?"

Mortell smiled self consciously. "Wait until you hear my plans for to-night, Fred, and then tremble for my safety. Here is a copy of the play. See, I am placing his letter in it. There is no doubt that he wrote it. When I give the word, I want you to pass the book to him; and be sure to drop the letter where one of the girls can pick it up. She will read it if we make her believe it is a love letter. I want her to read it aloud."

Bellamy shook his head. "You probably know your business, old chap; I hope you do."

Mortell was the picture of confidence. "It's very simple, my boy. I intend to make Standing think he doesn't know me, after all, or wish that he didn't. The boldest stroke is always the safest. The more Standing knows, the better for me. Likely enough, I shall give him some additional information, myself — just a hint or two — then we shall see what we shall see."

Bellamy was still skeptical and Mortell smiled reassuringly. "Don't take it so hard, Fred. I ought to tell

you everything right now, but I can't very well. It might spoil my plans."

Bellamy appeared injured. "I don't want you to tell me a thing, man."

"I know, Fred, bless you; but Standing and I happen to have met before."

Bellamy was doing some vigorous thinking and Mortell knew it.

"It's great fun, Fred, enacting this role of Ralph Mortell which you and that other great playwright, Destiny, have assigned to me; and," he leaned lower and spoke in firm tones, "I'm not through with it yet, and I'll be playing it after to-night, and Standing will clap his hands every time I give him the cue."

They both straightened up in their chairs. Mortell's assurance was contagious.

"Now there's Burt Shurly coming in here — he's the most natural feeder in Chicago. I'm just bound to spend some money, Freddie. See if you can round up the lost friends."

CHAPTER XIV.

Standing's Bad Heart

THE rehearsals for the charity play were affording considerable entertainment to the cast and Mr. Standing who had appointed himself stage director and never missed a meeting. When Bellamy came in with his crowd, explaining that he had taken the liberty to give the artists an opportunity to work off any possible stage fright before it was too late, everyone applauded save Standing who sat there unmoved, apparently displeased over sharing a privilege which he had hitherto monopolized.

Of course the rehearsal could not begin at once, and Mrs. Collins found it necessary to display the proceeds from the splendid advance sale of tickets which she had collected that afternoon. The money in bills of large denominations, was dumped promiscuously into a funny and frail little bag; and she was not satisfied with one addition, for the amount ran above five thousand dollars.

"You are very brave," Bellamy told her, "to carry such a treasure."

Mrs. Collins was not the least alarmed. "Do you really think so, or rather that I am foolhardy, instead? The banks were closed, my car was in the repair shop, and I rode all the way home in a crowded street car, but my hand was on the bag all the time."

There was a chorus of startled "Ohs" from the ladies and a roar of laughter from the men. Mrs. Collins was neither impressed nor pleased.

"At any rate, there is no danger, now. This is the

North Side and I am among friends," she declared in challenging tones.

"There have been burglaries on the North Side," Bellamy persisted.

Mrs. Collins could not deny that assertion but her resolution was irrevocable.

"It's true, but the responsibility is mine and I shall not run away from it. However, in deference to the gloomy views of my friends, I shall consent to share the responsibility by asking Mr. Mortell and Mr. Standing to walk home with Mr. Collins and myself."

"Walk?" a dozen chorused. "You are not going to walk home?"

"Of course, it's such a perfect night for walking. We walked over. What are we coming to — a walkless and legless age? The distance is scarcely more than a block."

"Three blocks and a half, to be correct," Mr. Collins seconded.

Mr. Collins' effort won immediate recognition. The ladies tittered, Mrs. Collins herself laughed outright, and Bellamy roared and slapped poor Mortell upon the back until it ached. It was a wonderful triumph for little inconsequential Mr. Collins. Heaven knew, he had tried often enough to say something funny, and now, all unconsciously, without the least effort, he had done it.

Now, while everyone else was having a good time, Standing was finding the diversion less pleasing every minute. From the instant that Mrs. Collins displayed her dangerous sum of money — the appearance of five thousand dollars did not appeal to him at all — he had been working his way toward the door; but he was not to escape so easily.

"I'm going for cigars," he explained in answer to

Mrs. Collins' call, without turning around. "I'll be back in a few minutes."

"Then, don't go any farther," Mortell shouted, "the library is full of cigars — more cigars than books."

Standing came back, the picture of enforced humility. "I am not trying to evade my responsibility, Mrs. Collins. It takes a smart man to get by with a little lie, doesn't it? Well, there is only one thing to do. I feel sorry for you folks but you have brought it upon yourselves — I'll have to take you all into my confidence. I am going to the little drug store on the corner, not for cigars at all, but for medicine. You might not think, to look at me, that my heart is fussing up a bit but my doctor does. He is making me take a heart tonic and I've missed two doses to-day. I'll be right back."

Bellamy edged over to Mortell. "If you were looking right at a thousand watt Tungsten, could you see a light?" he whispered.

"Pretty sure thing."

"He is mighty hard up or nervy."

"He knows the money won't be there after to-night."

"I'm going upstairs and telephone the police. It's the Collins house to-night. We'll surprise him this time."

Standing returned triumphantly flourishing a small bottle of a black concoction which no one would consent to taste. Mrs. Collins was worried. "We really need a prompter to-night but I do not feel like asking you, Mr. Standing."

Standing laughed. "By all means, Mrs. Collins. My case is not that desperate. A few bottles of this bitter stuff now and then is the price I pay for the privilege of smoking — nothing dangerous, I imagine."

So the guests took their seats and Standing, with the air of a martyr, dropped into a chair at one end. Mortell passed his copy of the play to Bellamy.

"Here, boy, give this book to the stage manager," he ordered with a dramatic flourish.

Bellamy was very awkward and dropped the book and a sheet of paper fluttered to the floor. One of the girls picked it up and quite naturally glanced at the writing.

"Why, it's a letter," she shouted with a challenging look at Mortell.

Bellamy threw up both arms in supplication. "Don't read it, girls," he warned. "You'll be disappointed. Mortell gets a hundred love letters a day. They are all monotonously alike. The janitor showed me a couple of hundred that he saved from the sweepings, and even he has quit reading them."

The scheme worked perfectly, and like a flock of hungry, chattering birds, the young ladies swooped down upon the unfortunate discoverer.

"Stop, girls," she shouted. "Don't crush me. Let me breathe. I'll read it aloud if you let me. It's too funny for anything."

While Standing sat still as a statue with the open book in his lap, superior and bored; and Mortell stood back helpless and somewhat embarrassed, for he never dreamed Bellamy would go so far or make the affair so personal, the triumphant young woman read these words.

"I know who you are. I know all about you. I am not so easy as some people on the North Side, and you had better mind your own business. This is final.

One who knows you."

The effect was rather startling. A few tried to laugh but evidently the reader alone found it funny.

"It's not a love letter at all," someone observed.

"It's threatening rather than funny," another remarked.

"It's a man's hand, that's sure," the reader admitted with belated conviction; and in this light, finding it a thing to be feared, she lost no time in restoring it to Mortell.

Mortell turned to Bellamy with a puzzled expression. "I don't know what to do about this, Fred. You have put me in a hole."

Bellamy's red face took on a brighter shade. "I didn't know the fishing would be so good," he chuckled, "but don't worry. The ladies will not believe that you are such a trifler — they know I was joking."

Mortell shook his head. "It's not that at all. You see, this letter does not belong to me. I found it after last rehearsal." (Standing was taking in every word.) "I know who dropped it. But the remarkable thing about the letter is that I received one of the same wording in a different handwriting, and several others of a similar nature. Some one called this letter funny. It is funny to me, but I am sure the author did not intend it to be funny. I am also sure that the composer did not write the letter I received. He is too cowardly to risk disguising his own hand. This letter which you have seen is a copy from which mine was written by a confederate. All the threatening letters were written by the same confederate. You can draw your own conclusions."

There was not another sound in the whole room. Every eye was upon Mortell. Without another word, he coolly walked up to Standing and dropped the letter in his

lap. It was a terrible moment for Standing. Mortell's eyes were hard and cold as steel. The crowd had gathered behind him under the spell of this sudden drama. Standing's face turned white. He would not rise. He failed miserably before all these witnesses.

"Why the Devil, are you giving me this?" he snarled making the best showing possible without daring to look up.

Mortell was merciless. "Because you dropped it," he declared.

"Is that all the evidence you've got?" Standing retorted, gaining the courage to sneer.

"It is not. This letter is positively in your handwriting. You know it is."

Standing moved uneasily. "Whose business is it, anyway? Are you a detective?"

"It's my business. I am tired of this blackmail. I want you to explain to these people just why you wrote all those threatening letters or I — will."

"I didn't write them, I tell you."

Mortell was holding himself in with an effort. He turned to his audience. "This man is my guest, but —"

The scene was becoming too one sided to suit Bellamy's idea of fair play. "Come, Ralph," he pleaded linking his arm into the attorney's and dragging him back, "my opinion is that it's a joke, nothing more serious, I'm sure."

Standing leaped into the breach. "That's the very thing. Maybe I *can* straighten it out. I did write this sheet and I will tell you the reason. I didn't suppose anyone else was interested in my private affairs, else I might have prevented this rumpus and I realize now that I should have spoken out at once. I got a letter just like this: same wording exactly. I confess it annoyed me at first. I must

have read it a dozen times until it became fixed in my memory. I decided next morning to take it to the postal inspector but could not find the thing so wrote this letter from memory. Well, the inspector was not in when I called and I never went back — it seemed more ridiculous than anything else after I had time to cool down."

Mortell shook his head deprecatingly and smiled. "I cannot take it so lightly. I gave my letters to the inspector."

Standing assumed a careless air. "As you please: I am going to forget the incident."

Mrs. Collins arose grandly to the occasion. "So after all, you gentlemen are partners in trouble? Why not put your heads together and get after this busy blackmailer?" She turned to the others. "Come, children, Mr. Mortell has a collection of old masters that is quite unbelievable."

It was a rather disappointing climax but there was no alternative; and in a second the room was cleared of all but the leading actors in the unexpected drama. Mortell selected a chair directly in front of his enemy. Standing had not moved since the quarrel began. There was no fight in him, that was certain.

"Now Standing, we are going to thresh this thing out in a hurry. Let's speak plain. Why did you write those letters? What do you want?"

Standing looked up uncertainly and immediately dropped his eyes. "I was fooling. I didn't know you would get sore."

Mortell was thoroughly disgusted. "That's puerile, that answer. I know what you want; but Heavens, man, you are not to be left alone by threatening me. I chose this method to convince you that I am not to be intimidated.

You will never have a better chance to tell who I am than you had to-night. Why didn't you tell?"

"I haven't anything against you."

Mortell snapped his fingers in the craven's face. "You didn't dare tell; you know you didn't and you never will dare, so why waste your time threatening me?"

"I haven't anything against you," he whined again.

Mortell moved closer and Standing hung his head still lower.

"Standing, take a good look at me."

Standing obeyed like an automaton but his eyes fell at once.

"I am Ralph Mortell. Conditions have changed since Mandell disappeared. You would have a pretty hard time to make these people believe I am someone else, and what if you could convince them? It would only spoil a little fun for me. That's all. I would not leave Chicago or change my occupation or lose my friends. But my heart is set on this thing, man; and I shall not be denied. I have never committed a crime but I could for — this."

He arose from his chair and leaned over the cowering figure of the big helpless man. "You can't unscramble an egg, can you? What you have done cannot be undone. It wouldn't do society any good to hurt your big hulk, would it? If you lived straight and clean from now on, it wouldn't, would it?

"Standing, I know you hate me and I haven't any love for you." He straightened up with a hand resting lightly on the back of the chair, "At the very great risk of boring you, I shall take the liberty of offering you a little advice. Don't tell anyone that you ever met me before. Whatever happens, don't make any mistake about my name.

It's Ralph Mortell. I am a very appreciative person. I might do incredible things for a man who favors me."

Standing shifted about nervously, and cleared his throat; but did not dare commit himself. Mortell did not wait for an answer.

"Buck up, Standing," he said with a friendly thump on the back. "We will pass through the library. There is something there which the Devil prompts weak men to drink when they need bracing. I shall apologize for making a scene. We must be good friends when we join the crowd."

Standing gained courage with every step. He was thinking that, after all, he had come out of the encounter not so badly. Mortell had the advantage, naturally enough, and could talk brave: he was a good bluffer: anyone can bluff in his own house with a gang behind him.

He was wild when he thought of the letter. He had never been so careless. It would be a good lesson. So Mortell wanted something, too. He was not too brave to explain that. Very well, it takes two to make a bargain, and Mr. Mortell would have to come half way; and Standing began to believe that he would. He wished he had known about this when he went to the drug store. Pretty dangerous business, escorting five thousand dollars around. No telling what might happen to such a brave fellow as this masquerading attorney. He was quite himself again when Mortell addressed the waiting company.

"Mr. Standing has been very magnanimous, folks, and we have joined forces. I owe an apology to all of you. I have been very remiss in my observation of the rules of hospitality and good breeding. I jumped at conclusions. I have done my friend a grave injustice and have humiliated

myself. Please help me out by keeping this affair a secret.

"Mr. Standing and I are not native sons. Somebody who does not know us as well as might be, thinks we are easy, no doubt. Don't be surprised after this if we both are accused of anything from matrimony to wife abandonment."

Standing gave a start, turned pale, and forced a smile. Bellamy and Mortell exchanged significant glances. No one else shared their interpretation of the facial display. Finally rehearsal started.

Bellamy drew his friend aside as he was leaving the house.

"Be careful of Standing," he warned.

Mortell chuckled. "He certainly had a nice time. I am greatly obliged to you, Fred. The enemy capitulated at once."

Bellamy was worried. "That's the worst of it. When a fellow surrenders without a fight there is a yellow streak in him, and a fellow with a yellow streak is mighty dangerous. Don't let him get behind you."

Mortell laughed again. "No chance. Standing is my friend."

When Mortell returned to the library, Standing and the Collins' were ready for the walk home.

CHAPTER XV.

A Surgeon and a Man

MORTELL was thinking of little things for he was walking with the "husband of Mrs. Collins." He had often laughed at the sobriquet. He would never laugh at it again. It was so appropriate. He wished Bellamy might drop around a corner, for Standing had deliberately gone ahead with the lady and the treasure.

It was a wonderful night for walking, with a high, full moon. It seemed a ridiculous coincidence — the night and the little man who couldn't talk. Mechanically he drew out his watch, halting before an alley. The hour was very late. Standing and Mrs. Collins were moving slowly but a few steps in advance. The little man stopped with him. Not another sound disturbed the sleeping neighborhood. As he stood there with his eyes close to the face of his watch, he felt a sharp blow upon the left temple. He did not lose consciousness at once but was very confused. He heard Mrs. Collins scream and saw someone run down the alley with her bag. Then he became terribly dizzy and sank to the sidewalk. His head ached fearfully. He was awake but weak.

Mrs. Collins must have fainted. He was positive he had seen her necklace in Standing's hands, but his head whirled so much that he could not fix an object for long. When he did begin to feel sure of himself, his head was in Mrs. Collins' lap, her husband was fanning him with his

hat, and Standing was leaning down, inquiring if he was badly injured.

Mortell ran his hand over the left temple and found it swollen and painful.

"My head aches pretty badly but I am not dizzy any longer," he assured them. "It's nothing serious; just a hard rap in a soft place." He turned to Mrs. Collins who was stroking his forehead to relieve the headache. "But you have been held up. Did you lose anything else?" he inquired.

"Oh that's a mere trifle."

"Did you lose any other valuables — any jewelry?" he persisted.

Automatically her hand went to her throat. Standing was looking elsewhere.

"My necklace is gone," she gasped. "I never knew it."

"That was very valuable. Don't waste another thought on me."

Mrs. Collins could not entirely conceal her feelings. "My grandmother wore that necklace when she was a belle. It is all that is left of a once big fortune. It is really historical, but it is easier to trace such a thing than money. If we do not recover it, it will not be from lack of effort."

His companions would not permit Mortell to walk alone; but his strength returned rapidly and in a few minutes they were retracing their steps to his home.

"It was done in a second," Standing explained as they walked along. "The fellow came from behind. He got you first, snatched the necklace and bag with one hand and struck at me with the other. By that time he was really in front of me, so I had the advantage over you and dodged his blow. Then Mrs. Collins fainted; and I had something

on my hands; and in the confusion, the footpad escaped down the alley."

At the door, Standing left them at once. There seemed no need to detain him — Mortell felt so much better. Once within the house, however, Mrs. Collins aroused the servants, summoned a near-by physician without consulting the attorney, and kept the telephone busy with a personal statement to the police and a favored night editor.

Mortell lay down upon a divan trying to convince himself that he was not beginning to feel worse; for though he lay still as possible, the room and the furnishings began to move. His pain was no longer acute. His hearing was dulled. The voice at the telephone sounded farther and farther. His mouth seemed to be full and his lips and tongue thick and heavy. He was becoming thoroughly frightened. He tried to speak; tried and tried until his words became a wild shriek for help.

"Call — Helen — Ver-ban-an — Doc-ther-Gordon — 14 — 14 — 16 Canal."

Mrs. Collins rushed in. He was unconscious before she reached him.

"Heaven help us. What does it mean?" she moaned, dropping to her knees, catching his limp hands, and listening in terror to his slowly loudly beating heart. His breathing was labored and convulsive. His appearance was frightful.

"Oh, why did we let Mr. Standing go? Thank God, I have sent for a physician. He ought to be here. What can we do?" She looked at her officious little helpmate as upon a forlorn hope.

"The husband of Mrs. Collins" was equal to the emergency.

"He is comatose, poor fellow, and we have no time to lose. I'll call Doctor Gordon at once. I'll explain everything."

Doctor Bergan summoned by Mrs. Collins dashed up at the instant in his car.

"Oh, doctor, is he dying? Quick, tell me," and the overwrought woman pinched the doctor's arm until he squirmed.

"Compose yourself, dear lady, and answer my questions. We must hurry. He was struck by some dull instrument upon the temple?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Two hours ago."

"Has he been unconscious ever since? You didn't mention this when you called me."

"No, no. He lost consciousness not ten minutes before you arrived. He was dazed at first but only for a minute or two. The blow did not knock him down at once, and he rallied rapidly and insisted upon walking home. It was not far," and briefly she related the history of the holdup and subsequent events.

The doctor made a hurried examination. "I must have help, Mrs. Collins," he told her. "This is a surgical case and I am no surgeon. We must remove him to a hospital at once."

Mr. Collins came into the room. "I found him," he announced. "He is coming with a surgeon. He will call again after communicating with the surgeon. It's a rather strange coincidence, for he also directed me to go for Miss Verban."

The doctor turned to Mrs. Collins, apparently re-

lieved by the announcement. "The poor fellow called for Doctor Gordon and naturally he will take charge of the case. Is there anything I can do for you?"

Mrs. Collins was perilously near the breaking point.

"Please stay until Doctor Gordon comes," she faltered. "I have not the slightest idea what it all means. I can hardly believe I am not dreaming. I must go for Helen. I don't understand it at all — the poor boy's calling for her; but I am going for her. I can't stand it any longer."

The telephone rang again and Mr. Collins sprang to the receiver. "It's from Doctor Gordon," he shouted, relaying the message word for word. "Doctor B—— will operate. The hospital ambulance is on the way. It's from St. Joseph's because that is the nearest. We must bring Helen there at once."

"My car is waiting," Doctor Bergan said, offering his arm to the bewildered woman. "I'll remain."

It seemed ages to Mrs. Collins before the car came to a violent stop in front of the Verban residence. She did not waste a minute at the door but sped on to Helen's apartments. The young woman awoke with a cry of terror, her room flooded with light and a strange woman hastily gathering an armful of her own clothes.

"It's I, Madge. Hurry, dear, dress fast as you can."

Helen relieved at once by the sound of her friend's voice, turned out of bed and rubbed her eyes; and as they worked together, Mrs. Collins related the fearful story of the attack. When she came to the climax, repeating his cry for help and rushing in to find him unconscious, Helen pulled herself back in anger.

"It's the work of that scoundrel, Standing," she declared.

"But Standing was with us."

"It's his work, I tell you," she fairly shouted. She shook her head sadly. "Poor boy, poor young man," she moaned, and broke down entirely.

Mrs. Collins lifted the quivering little body and kissed her. "Now, little girl, be brave," she pleaded. "We must hurry. I don't know what it means but we must go."

Helen cleared her eyes. Her face brightened at once. "He wants to tell me something, Madge — something about business." She tried to smile and broke down again. "I am afraid, Madge. I cannot trust myself. I never saw anyone die."

Mrs. Collins was actually carrying her from the house. "Doctor B—— will save him, dearie. We are to see a wonderful operation. I have a world of faith in Doctor B——."

Helen clung to her all of the way.

"Don't leave me a minute, will you Madge?" she pleaded, when the machine halted in front of the hospital, "not a minute? I am afraid."

"No, dear little girl, of course I will not leave you a second."

The hospital was quiet. Doctor Gordon met them outside the operating room. He wore a white gown. Helen shrank back involuntarily.

"The middle meningeal artery of the left side is ruptured," he announced. "Nothing but an operation can save him, and that is hazardous. Only a few survive, but we are early and Doctor B—— is very skillful. Doctor B—— wants you, little Missie, to see his condition. The

poor young man called for us and Doctor B—— is anxious to have us know he is doing the right thing."

Mrs. Collins put her strong arms about the trembling little lady and they followed the big white gowned doctor. The great surgeon stood by the operating table, a statue in white, with his face and head almost buried in gauze. On a little table was a tray of instruments which had been sterilized, awaiting their master's hand. The anaesthetist sat at the head of the operating table with a mask poised over the stricken man's face. A small mob of white gowned internes and nurses were grouped upon either side.

Doctor B—— looked at the frightened young woman almost impatiently. "All right, Miss Verban?" he coolly asked.

She bowed her head and turned her back to the awful sight. Her heart was full of protest. They looked so cruel, everyone in unfeeling white.

"Take the ladies down stairs, Gordon," the surgeon directed, "and come back. We are losing valuable time."

They were silent, it seemed ages to Helen before either dared speak.

"Isn't he a wonderful man?" Mrs. Collins asked.

"Doctor B——, you mean?"

"Yes."

"He's a wonderful brute."

"Poor child," Mrs. Collins was always happy in defence, "you will change your mind. Doctor B—— is a charming man. It was the surgeon who spoke to you, not the man. A surgeon has to be calm and cold when he does his work, but the heart is there when he plans it and when it is finished."

"I am afraid, Madge, afraid he will never wake up."

"Of course he will, child. Doctor B—— told me only a little anaesthetic would be needed."

Helen shook with terror. "Then he must be dead. We would hear him cry, wouldn't we, Madge?"

"No — no, dearie. I have been talking too much."

Helen nestled up closer. "You are the smartest woman in the world, Madge, and I'll never be angry with you again."

"I'll forgive you if you are."

"You are always good."

"Don't say that, dearie. I am always bungling everything."

For answer, Helen leaned over and kissed her. They did not want to talk after that.

It could not have been three quarters of an hour until the door opened and Doctor Gordon came in with the light of good news in his eyes.

"He wants you, Missie. Come, both of you."

There was a different atmosphere here: no cruel instruments nor smell of anaesthetics. There were flowers and bedroom furnishings. Doctor B——, with his assistants, stood at the foot of the bed, so irrepressibly happy, that Helen felt like casting herself at his feet.

He took her hand and led her to the bedside. From beneath a circle of skillfully coiled soft white gauze, two magnificent black eyes looked up at her in perfect recognition.

"Helen, little, wonderful woman," he whispered, "you came."

She leaned down with her breath warm upon his cold cheek and kissed him before everyone. Then she felt a

light touch upon her arm and the surgeon, big hearted, human, man, led her gently from the room.

"Now, little lady," he said, holding her face in his big warm hands — and his eyes were as soft as a boy's — "you will just have to keep smiling. Twelve hours of perfect rest will do the business. He will be every bit as strong and smart and handsome as ever."

He turned to Mrs. Collins for Helen was not master of herself. "What is your pleasure?"

"I am going home with Helen," she answered.

"Fine. My machine will accommodate you nicely."

Back in her own apartments, Helen moved like an automaton. Mrs. Collins put her to bed and crept in beside her; and was half asleep when a voice aroused her.

"Are you awake, Madge?"

"Yes, dearie, can't you sleep?"

Helen did not reply at once. Mrs. Collins touched her face. It was hot as fire.

"Oh, Madge, what have I done, what have I done?"

"Nothing, child."

"What will they think, what will they think?"

"That you are a sweet, womanly woman; and I love you for what you did."

"It's terrible, Madge. I will be ashamed to face anyone again. Why did I forget myself? He didn't want to tell me anything, did he?"

She was becoming hysterical and Mrs. Collins held her. "Listen, little girl. I am much older than you. I am sure he did want to tell you something — something too precious for others to hear."

"What, Madge?"

"That he loved you, dearie."

The little lady sighed deeply. "He will never tell me that after what I did, to-night. Oh, Madge, I must never see him again. He will think I am bold, a good for nothing. Why Madge, I have seen him only once or twice but — I — I —loved him — and — I — I — can't help it."

"Of course, dearie, you must love him. It's just right. God brought him into your life. We cannot doubt that. He is worthy of you."

"But it seems to me I have known him a long time. I must never see him again. Never again."

Mrs. Collins drew her close. "It's all right, dear little girl. It's just right."

For a few minutes, the troubled little woman was quiet.

"Say, Madge," she lisped with the heavy intonation of a very sleepy person, "Doctor B—— *is* a wonderful man."

CHAPTER XVI.

Pa and Ma and Etta

MORTELL was seriously contemplating a change in his business. He never realized before his injury how nearly impossible it is for one man to do another man's work. It seemed that nothing had been done while he was gone, if he were to judge by the amount of work that he found waiting for him.

A colleague had expressed his own idea very well. If the firm reads: "R. Mortell, Att'y at Law," it makes little difference how many other names appear on the door, the client insists upon seeing R. Mortell himself; but change it to "Mortell, O'Brien, Rosenthal and Blatt;" and a certain proportion will like the name of O'Brien, another will prefer the sound of Rosenthal, while still another will want to speak in their native tongue with Blatt. Moreover, every client feels that he is consulting four men and getting the benefit of four brains instead of one.

Mortell was deep in the contemplation of this scheme — everyone else had left the office, it was nearly six o'clock — when the door swung violently open and the detective whom he thought in the East, burst unannounced into his presence. Mortell was surprised and delighted. The detective's bright red hair was only a shade brighter than his face, always the picture of exertion. He dropped heavily into a chair and drew a deep breath.

Mortell gave him a big black cigar and lighted one

himself. "I perceive you have a long story and it ought to go better with a man's smoke. Cut loose; I'm all ears."

The detective took in another deep breath and a half dozen long draws from the formidable cigar, before he was ready to talk. "I hardly know where to begin," he said. "I've been in town since two thirty but dogged if I could find the time or opportunity to even telephone you."

Mortell looked incredulous. "That's three hours ago. What in the world have you been doing?"

"Getting Pa and Ma located."

Mortell rocked nervously in his chair. "Never mind Pa and Ma. Tell me about your trip, the clue — was it another wild goose chase?"

The detective looked up challengingly. "Not on your life," he replied. "I've got the woman that was murdered."

Mortell leaned forward in rapt attention. "Dead? You have found the corpse, you mean?"

The detective's bright eyes twinkled. "Oh, she is still able to move and take nourishment, but I've not seen her smile or heard anything from her but 'yes' and 'no.' "

Mortell accepted every word at its full value.

"Pretty bad shape?" he cautiously inquired.

"Hard to tell. She has a little color in her cheeks and don't appear to suffer any but Pa and Ma do all the thinking and talking and suffering for her. She's no bigger than my little girl who is only twelve, but Pa and Ma wouldn't let her grow bigger if she wanted to."

"Who, the devil, are Pa and Ma?"

"Pa is a Majah of State artillery, sah, regular tin soldier with a back that never bends. He is a young old fellow with iron grey hair and whiskers. He has never heard a joke in his whole life and has barrels of money.

His face is a great deal like his back — only moves when he talks or eats, and the Lord knows he can do both.

"Ma is a little more limber but looks a whole lot older. She is wiry, squirmy, and dead set against sickness and doctors. Pa is a first rate fellow at heart. Ma means well too, but has a pretty sharp tongue."

Mortell shook his head good naturedly. "Is Etta — the murdered woman?"

"The very same; and, sometimes, I think she would be happier if she had not pulled through at all."

Mortell shook his head again. "I'll be ever so grateful if you tell me the straight of this thing."

The detective consulted his watch. "I'll do my best but I'll have to hurry or Pa and Ma will change hotels again before I get back."

"Where are they now?"

"I left them at the Congress but that was thirty minutes ago; and figuring according to past performances, they have had time to register in two hotels already."

"For heaven's sake, what sort of freaks are they?"

"I don't know. Perhaps you can decide when you see them. I never met any like them, myself. Etta can be explained but Pa and Ma — of course, there are one or two countries I've never been in, but you can't find another team like them in America or Ireland, I'm sure. Pa and Ma want a quiet place and it's no wonder after seeing the little box of a village in Mass. where they own a house bigger than the rest of the town. I have not the time to tell you the story of our hotel hunt. One time it was the noise of the elevated, another time a crowded elevator, then a defective electric light switch—they were in too great a hurry to wait

for repairs—in another hotel, there was a little speck in the ice water, etc. etc."

"Take them out of the 'Loop' by all means."

"I tried that but nothing doing. Got almost insulted. Thought I took them for Gills. But they have another day to-morrow. I don't suppose they will stay in one place more than a day."

"I don't imagine they have any friends or acquaintances in Chicago?"

The detective smiled self consciously. "Can you beat it, the Major's dad and Mr. Collins' father were college chums at Harvard. They expect the Collins' will be glad to receive them. They are to call to-morrow."

"That will be easy," Mortell agreed. "I wish you had brought them here with you."

The detective laughed outright. "Pa can't be brought unless he thinks of it first. He wants to see you bad enough and even thought of sending for you from the depot. You have got to go to him, and that reminds me. The Major insists upon your dining with him this very evening. He even includes myself. He was beginning to make arrangements to have dinner served in his apartments, when he directed me to look you up."

Mortell closed his desk with a bang.

"Then, let us go at once."

The detective raised a lazy hand. "No hurry at all. Ten to one, he's not through ordering yet. He will wind up by going to the kitchen and giving instructions in person. The Major has a world of confidence in — himself."

Mortell took time to brush his hat. "Come on," he said to his dallying visitor.

"Wait a minute. You forget that I have made no report yet. I'll be brief. We have plenty of time."

Mortell sat down again with renewed interest.

"Major Strong has one child, his daughter, Etta. Her mother died before Etta was a year old. He married his present wife after Etta was grown up. Etta was a very attractive young lady, is yet, for that matter, but there never was a chap in the village or state either with courage enough to call a second time, for Pa and Ma personally conducted the courting themselves, until a young college chap, who had met Etta during some college affair, came upon the scene. Pa and Ma didn't like him a bit. He was a better athlete than scholar; and after graduation, he just drifted around, working his way through the world like he worked it through college. Etta liked him all right; and to make a long story short, the young folks eloped.

"Pa and Ma met the situation with characteristic simplicity. Merely played there never had been a daughter."

"Who was the husband?"

"Charles Carson. As I told you he worked his way through college and continued the habit whenever he ran across an old college acquaintance or any other college man who would fall for the game. Finally they drifted to Chicago, where things went from bad to worse.

"Carson soon tired of his wife and only tolerated her at all because of the chance that the Major might do something for them. Eventually he began to prosper, but the more money he got hold of, the less he gave to his wife. He joined a couple of clubs and took apartments for himself, only, in another part of the city. He had never told her the means of his increasing affluence, and came to her

only when it suited his convenience; but she accepted his niggardly allowance without a murmur. Poor girl, there was nothing else for her to do; and when he came to her squalid, dingy, rooms, a fugitive from justice — for he was involved in another crooked deal — she clung to him, absolutely loyal, until a clever lawyer got him out of trouble again. Then he left her without a word."

Mortell shook his head. "Lawyers do some rotten work, don't they?" he exclaimed.

The detective could not suppress a smile but continued without replying to the interruption.

"This fellow was a cool bird, all right. Up in his own world, he posed among the Highbrows as a single gentleman. I don't know what name he selected but it was not his own. In the course of events, he fell in with some heiress and decided to marry her. Then he called upon his wife. He didn't have time to divorce her so tried to take a shorter cut — tried to buy her off, and when she refused his proposition, he attempted to frighten her into it.

"Finally, one dark night, he called again with candy and flowers and a nice story about being sorry for neglecting her, and the poor little thing fell for it at once. He told her he had brought a hack along to take her to their swell new home that very night. She had better come at once and could return in the morning for anything she thought she might want.

"The hack was in the alley. This didn't seem quite right but she was afraid to make a fuss. When she came to the back fence, she hesitated and her husband swore at her and pushed her through. Then she knew what it meant and tried to get away. I suppose it was the first time she ever stood up for herself. She put up a pretty

good fight but somehow got all the worst of it. She would never tell just who stabbed her. It must have been her husband, of course.

"You know the rest of the story. She was so frightened that she could think of nothing but getting as far away as possible; and soon as she could crawl out of bed, she escaped from the hospital. Her old landlady helped her and took her in and kept her hid while the police were looking for her. She was a nice big hearted, old girl, who had had a time of it herself. She opened negotiations with the Major while Etta was convalescing, and the Major came through like a man. He has so much old fashioned pride in his good name that he does foolish things sometimes, but he means well. The folks down East don't know a thing about this story. They knew Etta ran away and believe her husband is dead."

Mortell could not hold in any longer. He caught the detective's hand and wrung it with all his might. "Fine work, old man. I congratulate you a thousand times. You have been busy."

The detective tried to look very insignificant. "It's your head that deserves the credit, Mr. Mortell. You had the ideas. All I had to figure out was the landlady, and when I found her the rest was easy."

It was a happy moment for Mortell. "Have your own way, my friend. Team work is an advantage, but ideas are the least part of the wonderful work which you accomplished in so short a time."

"The hardest work was to get Pa and Ma to come," the detective laughed.

Mortell awoke from his dream with a start. "Oh, yes, one more question. Who is this beast of a husband?"

"Charles Carson."

"I mean his alibi."

The detective ran his fingers through his bright red hair and smiled. "I told you I didn't know what name he took, but I have an idea and of course, you haven't."

"Standing?"

The detective smiled broadly. "Really, the Major doesn't know. Etta had a picture of the scoundrel in a locket but the Major made short work of that. He doesn't like to talk about him. I got a pretty complete description and it fits Standing perfectly. The Major doesn't believe it is necessary to go into that feature at all. He is anxious to do justice to the student; and, by that, means not only to clear him of the crime but to reward him for the time he has lost and for the suffering which he has undergone."

Mortell thumped his associate on the back. "Fine business, isn't it?"

"One thing more, the Major will not stand for the hospital part of it. Pride enters here again. He doesn't want it known that a daughter of his was ever a charity patient. He wants us to believe that he was looking for her all of the time and removed her of his own accord."

"That will be easy," Mortell agreed. "We can fix up a story to order and charge all mistakes to the reporters."

Pa and Ma had not left the hotel when Mortell and the detective arrived. In fact such a thought was farthest from their minds.

"Why, the manager is real clevah, sah," Pa assured Mortell. "Raised in Massachusetts. Knew our name well — Strong, yes Major Strong is my name — it's an old name down East, ever since the Mayflower landed, yes

sah, — thank you, sah; and do you know he conducted me personally through the kitchen and insisted upon my showing the chef how we fix a lobster down home, and if you will pardon me, this is a wonderful hotel, and dinner will be served right here in our own apartments, directly."

The detective consulted his watch and whispered, "It's only an hour and a half since he began ordering." The detective was having the time of his life.

The Major drew the attorney aside. "We don't care a thing about that blackguard, Carson; but we intend to reward the poor student. I'll see to it that he gets nicely started in his profession."

That's very generous," Mortell declared, "but this Carson might still be in Chicago."

The Major shook his head. "No chance at all. I've looked into that, ran through the entire directory, sah, and the manager, Mr. Jones — knows us well — has never heard of such a man."

"But he may have an alibi," Mortell suggested.

The Major was discouraged. "In that event, we could not hope to identify him among nearly three million people."

"Men of his type generally betray themselves, sooner or later," Mortell argued. "I believe we shall apprehend him yet."

"But I shall not permit my daughter to appear against him." The Major was very emphatic. "She has suffered humiliation enough; we all have, and it is not necessary. We insist upon rescuing the poor student, but farther than that, there is a limit beyond which no man with a name like ours would be willing to go. Now, how long before we can have the student here, do you calculate? I have some

building to do on my farm, another barn, and I'll have to be there, myself."

Mortell calculated that it would take a very short time. "But you have friends in Chicago. Naturally they will expect a visit."

"Oh, yes, the Collins'. Knew us down East. John Collins and my father met in Harvard. We shall call upon them to-morrow. So they are friends of yours? Well, well, pretty clevah.

"Ma," he shouted at the top of his voice; "Ma," again, a little impatiently, and "Ma" came on the run. "Pa counts after all," Mortell chuckled to himself. "Ma, Mr. Mortell is a friend of the Collins'," the Major announced.

"That's grand, just grand," Ma agreed. "We are all friends, do you hear, Etta? We are all friends."

Etta heard and nodded her approval. Mortell observed her more closely. She was a timid, little being with a peculiar type of beauty; and intelligent enough, but anyone could see that it would require a radical change to win her back to an interest in life.

Dinner put an end to his reflections. The detective was right. The Major could *talk* and *eat*.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mortell Thinks

MORTELL enjoyed the dinner. It was nearly ten before the Major would permit him to depart. Their meeting brought mutual admiration. "No wonder the Major is somewhat narrow," Mortell mused. "Anyone who has lived all these years in a village of three hundred descendants of witch chasers would be narrow. A few hours with Bellamy will bring the old boy up to date."

Mortell was very anxious to communicate with Helen Verban —the detective would take care of Doctor Gordon — and he lost no time in calling her on the first telephone he could find.

"I had planned to see you this evening," he told her, "upon business"— he heard her laugh, these business meetings had become frequent —"but was unavoidably detained. No, not like our business at all — but listen. Our case, you know what I mean, is cleared up entirely. We have made a ten strike. I'll explain in the morning."

Mortell bade the detective good night and rushed to his office, and locked himself in. He was beginning to realize what this abrupt ending of such a protracted mystery meant. It was so simple and sudden and just what he expected. Of course Standing was the man.

"So the Major says he does not care about this Carson or Standing," he repeated to himself. "Well, the Major

may not have the whole say and might be persuaded to change his mind. He is not so stubborn as he thinks he is."

He pushed himself back from the table like a man who makes a sudden discovery. There was his own future to consider, and Standing entered into that. Just at the moment, Standing seemed to be nearly all of it.

"I must go slow," he said, talking aloud. "Perhaps the Major and I are more in accord than I thought. The instant Standing ceases to fear me, he will tell everything he knows."

Then Etta appeared and Helen Verban and the smirking face of Standing and the despairing conviction that honor and his own desire led to diametrically opposite directions. He leaned upon the desk and pressed his temples with both hands. That little trick always helped clear his brain. There must be a way to bring these roads together. He must find a way. Immediately an hundred wild schemes rushed through his mind.

"I've found it," he whispered, almost overcome by the product of his own reasoning, for the right to live in his own way was at stake; and he was beholding his whole future, determined at last that it should be as he, alone, master of his own destiny, should solemnly decree. Astir with new energy, he telephoned to Bellamy and learned that he was expected home within a half hour.

"Good, my unfailing friend, I shall beat you there," he assured himself. "If I mistake not, we are to transact some business that shall afford pleasure to both of us."

Bellamy found him upon his return in full possession of the den. "Wow, but you look serious and solemn tonight," he exclaimed. "What's amiss?"

"If my memory serves me right, you have, at rare

intervals, manifested some interest in the study of Spiritualism."

Bellamy assumed a graver air. "So you come for a seance?"

Mortell refused to joke. "Please inform me just what your accomplishments might be in this direction."

Bellamy looked up incredulously and realized that the question was put with earnest intent.

"I have perfected a system of table tapping that surprises my friends and affords me much amusement. I have been thinking of doing a little stunt in the house for our own entertainment, you know."

Mortell took a deep breath. "Now, Fred, on the square, do you believe you could make it interesting and just a little gruesome, let us say?"

"I cannot promise to make it interesting but I can promise to make it gruesome. I have some excellent papier-mache figures that would make old Hippocrates himself look a second time."

Mortell was as sober as ever. "How soon can you give the show?"

Bellamy was becoming interested himself. "In two days if necessary."

Mortell settled back in his chair with evident relief. "Go ahead. Spare no expense and do your best."

Before Bellamy could think of a question, Mortell related briefly the story of the day's development. "I have some original ideas concerning retribution," he explained. "Society is still conducted upon the old and delightful principle of 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' It demands of Standing that he pay the just penalty of his crimes. My plan also includes this happy consummation.

I propose, after the proper measure of suggestion, in an atmosphere which I shall expect your art to make effective, to suddenly confront our friend, Standing, with the woman whom he thinks he has murdered."

Bellamy looked at his friend a second time. "This is something new to you. I can hardly believe you are in earnest. It's cruel, man. The scene ought to be dramatic enough but it's dangerous and his humiliation will be extreme."

Mortell was not dissuaded at all. "I had begun to believe," he said in a quietly reminiscent manner, "that Standing is a dope fiend. That makes a coward of the bravest man. Now I know it is his conscience, the thought that he has taken human life, that saps his courage."

"It must be Hell," Bellamy agreed. "Don't you think it is enough? Standing has plenty to answer for besides this crime. He is not going to escape. Don't you think we had better leave him out of our show?"

Mortell shook his head emphatically. "Not after seeing Etta. You will agree with me when you see her. She must have her revenge."

"You are strong for revenge to-night. What's in you, anyway?"

"The face of Etta," Mortell enigmatically rejoined, "and a few other things more personal. I'm more or less of a theorist. You will understand better after the show. Meanwhile, my chief concern is to keep the principal actors apart. Mrs. Collins ought to be able to manage that."

"It's all right, old chap," Bellamy agreed. "I have enough confidence in your judgment to undertake any commission, however mysterious it may be."

Mortell looked up in surprise. "I am going to lift the veil pretty soon, old man. I am as tired of our secret as you are."

Bellamy's red face instantly took on a redder hue. "I beg your pardon, old fellow. I said more than I intended. I was not thinking of our arrangement at all."

Mortell's eyes softened. "I would never misjudge you, Fred. I know you too well. I was thinking from my own point of view anyway. Have you ever thought how big a job it is to carry a secret all alone? I don't want to do it. I'll lose my mind if I don't tell you. Only I want to tell you in my own way and time. It will not hurt you nor any one else. Standing knows. If I can silence him"— he arose and walked aimlessly about the room with his hands upon his temples. Suddenly he stopped walking, his hands dropped to his side, and his eyes were full of appeal. "When I explain everything to you, Fred, you will understand why I cannot permit Standing to ruin all my plans. So you see, once more I come with unreasonable demands upon your patience."

Bellamy would not have it that way. "I have never found you unreasonable nor your plans anything but pleasant and profitable to me. The show goes on, Old Chap, and we must hurry or the cops will get Standing with the rest of the gang before we can entertain him."

Mortell was startled. "As soon as that?" he asked incredulously.

"It won't be a week."

"I wonder if Standing suspects it?"

"Absolutely no. I met him to-day, strutting about, cockier than ever."

Mortell was silent for a few minutes. "That's just

the trouble," he said. He went up to his friend and caught him by the shoulders.

"Look here, Fred, if Standing is arrested, I'll leave Chicago before he has a chance to talk. There are two ways to shut him up: kill him or help him escape. I favor the second method. Will you kindly tip the police that he will be here on the night of our entertainment? Arrange to have a couple of men on guard. If necessary we can postpone the show until the police are ready. I want to settle things at one stroke."

After so many surprises, Bellamy was prepared for anything. "My part will be easy enough but your own — will it not be a bit risky?"

Mortell's jaw set with a snap. "Leave it to me. I know Standing, and I believe I know the police."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Standing Sees a Ghost

THE Major found himself in a position that was trying in the extreme. He had scarcely dressed, next morning, when the telephone rang and Mrs. Collins announced that she and her husband were coming at once with their limousine to bring him and family home. Naturally he was delighted by such forcible and unsolicited hospitality, but the hotel people had won his heart and he thought he ought to remain another day at least.

Massachusetts is a long way from Chicago and the Major was a thorough geographer. By the time he reached the big Collins' residence, he was still, figuratively speaking, within the borders of his own state; but he soon discovered, literally speaking, that he and Ma and Etta were thoroughly at home in this big mansion, long before his account of their journey was anywhere near completion. In a day, he forgot all about the important barn in Massachusetts; and calculated that he would be ready to inspect the Armory within a week.

Meanwhile, Bellamy was not idle and invitations were sent out for an "Evening of Something Different." A few minutes after Standing received his, Mortell telephoned to learn if he might call for him with his new car.

"I've got a foreign pet," he explained, "and the fanciest chauffeur in America. You've probably seen him driving my predecessor."

"Who, the nigger?" Standing exclaimed impulsively.

"Yes, big Mose. He thinks he went with the practice."

"Ah, ha," Standing ejaculated with his hand over the mouthpiece, "who's afraid now?" He asked a few questions about the new machine, and gracefully accepted the invitation.

He sat down with a look of profound disgust upon his face. "What a damned fool I've been," he told himself. He spent a day miserable with self censure, but nearly persuaded himself that Mortell was more of a coward and a better bluffer than he was.

So in due time, Mortell's big limousine stopped at the door of Standing's apartments and big Mose, in all his mulatto grandeur, sat immobile at the wheel. No one was embarrassed. Mortell was as volatile as a school boy, Mose saw nothing but the road ahead, and Standing took his seat with dignity unfeigned.

The house was rather dark. Bellamy, astonishingly serious, met his guests at the door. "An evening with the Spirits," he laconically announced, leading his friends, without another word, into the library and setting the example to them by quickly donning a white cowl and dabbing his face with powder.

"We look like a band of spooks all right," one of the ladies observed with a shiver.

Bellamy made a warning sign. "Spirits are very sensitive," he cautioned. "Let us be silent, undemonstrative, and sympathetic."

No one said a word but there was no doubt of their interest.

"Follow me," he commanded. Bellamy had re-

modeled an ancient dwelling. A hall ran the whole length of it. At the end, an old style combination freight and passenger elevator had not been removed. He halted them at the door. Lights were turned on. Above and upon both walls were scores of nude infants, painted life size.

"This is birth — the beginning," he explained; and as they moved in silence, they noted that they were gradually ascending and the mural decorations typified life expanding into childhood and adolescence, and with every step, the light was brighter. There was the triumph of man at his zenith; and then, beginning to descend, with dimming lights, appeared sickness and sorrow, disgrace and crime, and at last the allegory of fatal illness and serious accidents, with an invisible door swinging shut behind them, crowding them together into total darkness, and a fall which was broken by some mechanical contrivance, and a chorus of shrieks from the women and expressions of surprise from the men.

"This is death — the end." A door suddenly opened and let in the cool damp air and a light phosphorescence showing them a miniature cemetery with life sized bodies of the dead, resting in open graves.

"This man died of senility," Bellamy explained, halting his followers at the first grave.

"This man of acute illness," at another. "Observe the signs.

"This man was struck by lightning.

"This man hanged. You cannot miss the expression of guilt. There is no deceit in the grave."

Although done on a small scale, the effect was realistic. The ladies kept close to one another. Only fat Jack Osborne could smile. Standing, under an exterior of

unconcern, was plainly nervous. Bellamy caught him at the psychological moment.

"Look, Standing, this poor girl was stabbed to death."

The effect was startling. Standing drew back in terror; but Bellamy, purposely oblivious to his guest's discomfiture, quietly continued his calm recital.

"See that extreme pallor, that indescribable yearning in her face. That's air hunger."

Standing clutched at his own throat. He was swaying like a drunken man, finding it difficult to breathe. "Let up, you devil," he hissed. He wheeled about as if to escape. Every eye was upon him and he realized what a show he was making of himself. One limp hand went to his heart. Bellamy caught him about the shoulders.

"Go on, don't mind me," he stammered. "I've got a rotten heart — smoking too much again, but I'm all right now. Pardon me, please." He threw out his chest and deliberately looked at the figure again. "Stabbed, you say? That's an interesting study, indeed."

Bellamy apologized for seemingly having singled him out and Standing forced a laugh. "It's my treat, all right; and I will be satisfied if you all forget my weakness."

"Very well, friends," Bellamy resumed as though nothing unsual had occurred, "you have made the voyage of life and have looked upon the last of mortal man. Tell me, is there to be no answer to this question that we are asking and everyone has asked since the dawn of Creation — what comes after death?"

He paused for an answer.

"No one has come back to tell us," Mortell was bold enough to reply.

Bellamy was flattered. "I knew someone would say

that. I expect to convince you that they do come back. Let us leave this gruesome and hopeless scene."

He led his guests next into a pleasantly furnished, well lighted apartment. A big soft rug covered the floor. The air was full of sweet odors. Rich draperies and cabinets and crystals of many hues were everywhere. The general effect was restful.

Bellamy selected the first sitters and Standing was too self conscious to refuse the invitation. "I have invited you," Bellamy explained, "because I wish to share some good things with you. I have arranged the preliminary journey because I believe that allegory is more convincing than argument. I have long been a student of psychic phenomena. I approached the study with a full share of doubt but hoped for conviction, nevertheless. It has come. I expect to prove, as I said before, that the spirit of man has come back, and does come back and will come back to us — to-night."

He looked inquiringly at Standing. Standing was almost offended. "Show me," he peremptorily challenged.

"I am like Standing," Mortell declared. "I, too, am interested in psychic phenomena but never have found anything to alter my skepticism. There is so much deception. Permit me to illustrate.

"An Irish friend was very fond of relating a ghost story. During his youth, he and his pal attended a country dance, one Winter's night. The house was near a cemetery and not far from town where a large insane asylum was located.

"After the dance, the talk drifted to ghosts and allied subjects. In a fit of bravado, his pal announced that he would stand upon the highest grave and make a speech to

the dead, provided his friends would go as far as the fence to witness his effort.

"Nothing could have been more agreeable. The crowd halted at the fence while he made his way among the mounds and mounted the highest one. 'Let the dead arise,' he shouted, lifting his arms far above his head in a dramatic attitude. Outside, stood the quiet watchers. They had been regaled with the rarest morsels of spook lore. The night was only light enough for them to see.

"Once more the orator lifted his arms and repeated the challenge; and immediately with the sound of the clanking of chains, a figure slowly arose at his side, covered with frost and snow, moaning and groaning. There was a chorus of frightened cries from the outside, and the brave youth dropped speechless to the ground.

"A little later, when morning came, a few of the more venturesome young men went to the cemetery and found their companion — cold — dead."

The ladies gave expression to their terrified feelings, and Mortell hurriedly concluded.

"I mentioned an insane asylum. My friend never does. There was a patient there — an old lady with an incurable mania for running away. At times, the attendants put chains on her. She managed to escape, that night, chains and all. She was sleeping by the grave when the young man's challenge to the dead awoke her."

Although the tale added to the atmosphere, Bellamy showed plainly enough that he did not welcome such a long illustration. He briefly explained the manifestations of spirits by table tapping. The lights were lowered and the seance began.

First came the spirit of an old man asking for Mortell.

Much of the conversation was unintelligible to the others but the attorney was greatly impressed. "At some more opportune time," Mortell suggested, "I shall tell you how this man died with my name on his lips. He has explained things that Bellamy or anyone else could not know. What shall we say of it?" He looked about him questioningly. "I wish Mrs. Collins were here; she is so skeptical and ready to explain."

"They have company," Bellamy replied, "but will be here before long. They promised me."

"Company?" someone echoed.

"Yes, Major and Mrs. Strong from some little burg in Massachusetts."

Standing gave a start. Bellamy noticed it. "I believe you are a native of that state, Mr. Standing. Do you happen to know the Strongs? Their daughter was murdered in Chicago a few years ago. That may have something to do with their delay but they appeared anxious to come. They telephoned, this afternoon, that they were coming but would be late."

Standing was receiving altogether too much attention for his own comfort. "Sorry," he tartly replied, "but I imagine the Strongs are about the only people in Massachusetts that I never met."

Bellamy laughed good naturedly. "Serves me right, old chap."

Many other spirits appeared — some with helpful messages, some disappointing. Standing was becoming restless. Finally he arose from his chair. "I've got to go," he declared rather awkwardly. "I had almost overlooked a very important engagement."

One of the ladies laughed. "Wait, Mr. Standing," she teased. "Perhaps there's a spirit for you, too."

Standing was annoyed but helpless. "Sure, old man," Bellamy agreed. "Let's ask them."

Standing could do nothing but sit down again.

The table became very active. "There's a spirit calling for Charles Carson," Bellamy announced, turning apologetically to Standing.

Standing made no effort to conceal his feelings. "This is ridiculous. I have had enough," he snarled, tearing the hateful regalia from his body and making for the door. Had he known what was on the other side, he would have been in no such hurry. The conspirators knew. They had been playing for this exit since a half hour.

There was the sound of scurrying footsteps beyond that arrested the hurrying man in his tracks, someone lowered the lights; and the door opened wide upon a group of white faced, spooky looking beings, with a strange, timid, little creature, whiter than the rest, shrinking back against the ample form of Mrs. Collins, in terror of the big, staring, shaking man, directly before her.

Then many things happened all at the same time. Standing swaying helplessly about, made a wild effort to cover his eyes and fell senseless to the floor. A tall, stiff, military figure with iron grey hair and beard leaped upon the prostrate man and clutched his throat. Bellamy and Mortell dashed forward and pulled him off. One of the ladies fainted.

"What's wrong, Major?" Bellamy asked.

The Major straightened up in anger and resentment. "It's Carson," he roared—"the scoundrel who ruined my

home and tried to murder my little girl. What's he doing here?"

"It must be a mistake," Bellamy replied, hopefully.

"Mistake?" the Major shouted. "Mistake?" He looked around upon all these strange, hostile people and shook his head. His manner suddenly changed. "Mistake?" he repeated. There was something intensely pathetic in his speechless agony. "I only wish it were. I have prayed never to see that man again. It is my duty to kill him."

He had a chair in his hands. Only Mortell's quick action prevented a tragedy. "Restrain yourself, Major," he pleaded. "We are men of the law, you and I. This is Carson. The law of the land, the law which you and I help make, will save us the necessity of punishing him."

The Major bowed his head and leaned upon the arm of Bellamy. Mrs. Collins had cleared the room of the other guests. At the door, the Major turned around.

"I have changed my mind, Mr. Mortell," he declared with the return of his usual dignity. "We shall appear against this criminal. Depend upon it, absolutely."

Standing still lay on the floor. His heart was beating regularly. Mortell, sole guard, knew it was not a bad heart but a bad conscience that put him there. Standing had seen a ghost.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Short Cut to the Right Road

MORTELL shook his victim vigorously. Standing groaned, moved uneasily, and opened his eyes. They swept about the room in a wild stare until they came to the door. He raised his head, every sense alert, in fearful fascination. Almost reluctantly he looked farther and saw Mortell. A shaking hand slid over his heart and his head dropped heavily to the floor. He was making the best showing possible but could not deceive himself. The door was there and he could not keep his eyes from it. He pressed against them with all his might and rolled upon his face.

Mortell leaned over him. "That's for this blow on my head and your attacks upon defenceless women," he hissed.

The old Standing was not entirely gone. Ten years of lawlessness were not to be snuffed out by one shock. He glared back defiantly at his tormentor. "What hell hole have you got me into, you and your mob?" he snarled.

Mortell laughed mockingly.

"Do you believe in ghosts, you big bully — do you?" he demanded.

Standing did. "Oh, my God," he groaned, "are you ever going to quit? You have shown me up, disgracefully. What do you want?"

His question answered itself, and drove his eyes to the fateful door. He raised himself half erect. "Is she there?" he asked, forgetting everything else. "Did you see her? Did they all see her?"

Mortell shook his head.

"Of course not. She's dead. You murdered her."

Standing dared not open his eyes. He raised himself and held up his hands in a mute plea for mercy.

"There were people there in the doorway. Were there no people there? Did you see any people there?"

"I saw Major Strong and his wife and Mr. and Mrs. Collins."

"But Etta? I thought I saw Etta. Tell me I saw her. Tell me." Mortell knew there was something besides fear in the appeal. "Tell me I saw her," he begged. "Make me believe I saw her. I am a coward. I have had the fear of this thing in my heart so long. Make me believe I saw her alive. Can't you do it?"

A great wave of sympathy and a happiness that he never dreamed of came to Mortell. For a moment he was startled himself. Then he leaned down and lifted the poor fellow's head and let it rest in his own hand.

"Poor chap," he said in a soft voice. "What a rotten jumble life is after all! What would you say if I tell you it was Etta — alive?"

Standing was crying like a child. "Don't deceive me. Don't fill me with false hope. I am afraid to believe it. Swear. Swear."

Mortell raised his right hand though he knew Standing was not looking. "It was Etta, alive. I swear it was Etta."

Standing sat erect. "Let me have your hand," he begged, half laughing, half crying. "It's warm," he

crooned, "thank God, it's warm, and I am not seeing things, and I wasn't the cause of her death, was I?"

Mortell stroked his arm. "No, no, poor chap. She is alive — as strong and well as ever. Tell me why you started and got so deep in crime, a man with your conscience. Come, keep your eyes closed; and we will lap back ten years to the day you left the University. Tell me. It may make a difference. It may make me your friend."

Standing arose. "Let me sit in a chair," he suggested. "I am feeling different — better, I guess. I want to look back with your eyes. I can see myself standing upon the steps of Main Hall. I believe I can answer your question.

"I went there a poor boy. I was paid well for going. I could play football and pitch better than anyone else in the school. I was taken into a fraternity and received as an equal by men out of my class. That ruined me. My character was not strong enough for hard work. So I went out from Main Hall with my diploma and an empty pocket and a head full of false ideas. I would not work for what I thought I had a right to expect from the world. My late associates did not and why should I? So I began to steal and resort to crooked schemes; and every step in the wrong direction becomes so much easier that it simply drives one along. Then the supposed death of Etta robbed me of my physical courage and awakened new criminal tendencies. Physical cowardice is a prime requisite for a career of crime."

Mortell tried his old trick of pressing his temples.

"What a rotten jumble after all," he repeated. He looked up suddenly. "And now we must be frank with each other. You realize your peril. Major Strong is bent upon pushing you to the limit. And there is something else you

have to answer for. But tell me, what are you going to do about me?"

Standing raised his hand deprecatingly. "I shall bless you to the end of my days for you have brought me to the end of my torture. Oh, I have been tortured. My seeming exterior since you have known me was always made up — a part to play, and a difficult one and one that did not deceive myself, nor anyone else, it seems. I wish I could go back there to the steps of Main Hall again and make a new start. Well, I have had my fling. I am a coward no longer and will take my medicine. You know why I threatened you. That is wiped off the slate. I am going clean — to the pen, of course, — but going clean. I shall never do or say anything to trouble you. I am going clean — as clean — as — I — can."

Mortell was thunderstruck. This transformation of a character which he had thoroughly despised into one that called for all of his sympathy and for some of his admiration, cleared up, like a flash of lightning, a mass of unformed theories and made them real. The world knows only a little of its own history. Public opinion rarely dips beneath the surface. Men remain in the path of rectitude largely because there is no need to leave it. He was convinced that had Standing gone to a poor man's college and earned his way by waiting upon the table at a restaurant, for instance, he would not now be a problem for the officers of the law.

At that instant, Bellamy burst into the room.

"We are in a devil of a pickle," he shouted, "with a plain clothes cop planted on the front steps and the folks just beginning to have a little fun upstairs."

Mortell laughed. "Do they know about it?" he asked.

Bellamy was embarrassed. The scene was not what he had expected. He turned anxiously from Mortell to Standing. Standing was not the least excited. He sat there with his chin resting upon his upturned palm, like a man who has just finished a problem of some sort that leaves him physically tired and mentally reminiscent.

"No — eh," Bellamy drawled, "but confound it, I do."

"Go on, tell us all you know," Mortell said with a provoking smile.

Bellamy looked at Standing again and blurted out desperately, "McGinnis has pinched the Fortieth Avenue gang, and someone has squealed. No one can leave this house now without being seen. We are not to be disturbed for a while, but I am sure the Captain will come in due time, with a warrant and search the place."

"And who might this man be they are so anxious to arrest?"

Bellamy was beginning to feel foolish or angry, he hardly knew which. "Oh, hell, Charles Carson, alias Standing," he snapped. "They have been watching him for a week. They saw him get into your machine and tracked him here. They know he is in the house."

Standing turned around wearily and waved his hand. "I am ready, Mr. Mortell," he said undemonstratively. "Let me get out as quietly as possible."

Bellamy was puzzled. For the first time he seemed to grasp the changed situation, but Mortell gave him no chance to speak.

"Look here, Fred," he said, with characteristic emphasis, "if you were making a long journey in a strange land and came to a fork in the road and walked along until you were about half played out and discovered you had taken

the wrong road, would you trudge all the way back and begin all over again, or cut across, if someone showed you the way?"

Bellamy was too much interested to quibble. "I'd take the short cut, of course."

"That's just it. You could do so on a country road but not on life's road. Society would not permit it, but society may be wrong."

He pointed to Standing, helpless listener to this strange philosophy. "This man is Carson. He has taken the wrong road. He understands that thoroughly. He is ready to go back and begin all over again. I have decided it won't be necessary. I am going to show him the short cut."

Bellamy shook his head doubtingly. "I am with you, old man; but I don't see how you are going to do it. You have waited too long."

Mortell smiled reassuringly. "Not at all, Fred, you old chump. It's the easiest thing in the world; so easy that I have to laugh. Standing is going to walk right past Mr. Plain Clothes Man, step into my limousine, and drive leisurely away. Can you conceive of anything easier?"

Bellamy was becoming impatient and just a little irritable. Mortell had double-crossed him. He had expected to secrete Standing somewhere in the house. The walls of the old dwelling were very thick and in one room was a blind fireplace which Bellamy, by heroic efforts, converted into a door with concealed hinges. Behind it the space in the walls would permit a man a wide range of movement; and he could live there, if necessary, for some time with some degree of comfort. Mortell encouraged all this effort and now — what was he up to anyway?

"It would be a damned sight easier," Bellamy finally exploded, "if it weren't so light."

"All the better," Mortell obstinately declared.

Bellamy shook his head again. "Have your own way, but you had better get busy. The Major is all right so far. I put him wise to the cop on the steps, and he thinks it is pretty clever. In fact, he is so well pleased with the arrangement that he has decided not to spoil the evening for the other folks by discussing the affair any farther; and the other folks are decent enough to respect his wishes; but —"

"What are they all doing?" Mortell interrupted.

Bellamy looked rather fooilsh. "Tangoing, of course; but I was trying to tell you that the Captain may be here before you are ready for him."

"Thanks for the suggestion, Fred. I am glad you are not sore. I wanted to surprise you. Please send Mose in at once with the suit case I sent over this morning."

"I'll send Mose if I can locate him. He has been running in and out and racing the limousine up and down the street all evening."

Mose, however, was not hard to find and entered promptly with the bulging suit case.

"How is your friend on the steps?" Mortell asked with a wink.

"Easier than a roosting chicken," Mose chuckled. "I ran an errand for him, gave him a handful of cigars and a bottle, and he's ashamed to look at me now. 'Fraid I might think he's a cheap skate, I reckon. He won't ask no questions. I done went out by the back way twice and fixed the cop there, too. He's used to me now."

Mortell turned to Standing who sat there, a passive

spectator, but sustained by the faith which he could not help but feel in this new and resourceful friend.

"We are pressed for time but I want to clear up all possible misunderstanding between us before we separate. For some time I have been aware of the danger that threatened you. I knew to-night was set for the raid by the police. I am responsible for this rather startling and dramatic encounter with your former wife. I have been working diligently on this case. I sought revenge for myself and others whom you wronged. I declare now it is my firm conviction that I have been anything but charitable in my estimation of your character. I agree with you that everything depends upon the start.

"Now understand me. So far everything has happened according to my anticipations. I had planned to help you to get away for purely selfish reasons. I am anxious now to do so for a better reason. But tell me, do you care to escape?"

Standing looked at him deliberately, squarely in the eye. His face flushed a bit but he was very positive. "Yes, I would like to have another chance to make good," he quietly affirmed.

Mortell's jaws came together with a snap. "And you shall have it. My plans are not the impulse of the moment. They demand some inconvenience or hardships, rather. Do you trust me?"

"I don't understand you but I do trust you implicitly. That's the reason I'm not asking questions."

Mortell opened the suit case and a bundle of clothing and other articles rolled upon the floor. "Come, Mose, let's get to work," he commanded.

The three of them worked by a common instinct.

Standing shaved his own moustache while Mose clipped his hair. Mortell filled a basin with a black liquid.

"A dermatological friend prepared this," he said. "He worked on it a couple of days before striking the right shade. It's for your face and hands. Now shut your eyes and don't be stingy. Soap and water will not touch it."

Standing obeyed without a word and Mose mopped the clipped hair with another black concoction and worked a fine comb back and forth with such rapidity that it left a wonderful kink — a perfect duplication of his own. A pair of small spring wires slipped into the nostrils widened them without discomfort. Two artificial gums everted the lips and made them appear thicker; and shortly, where there had been two white men and one colored chauffeur, there appeared only the attorney and two colored chauffeurs, so nearly alike as to easily pass for twins.

Standing was given no time for reflection. "A bold man," Mortell said, "can enter a den of untamed lions or pass safely through a hostile mob, provided he holds his head up and looks straight ahead. Mose has been coming and going so often that no one pays any attention to him, and no one will pay any attention to you because you will be taken for Mose. You will probably meet no one until you come to the porch. The policeman will hardly look at you and if he does, have no fear." He gave Standing a mirror and Standing was instantly convinced.

"Step into my automobile and drive to Twelfth Street and Ashland Avenue. Leave the machine on the corner. Be sure to have the lights turned on. This is your next destination," handing him a small business card. "Don't be in too great a hurry and take a circuitous route. Spend a half hour in some convenient Colored neighborhood.

Enter this little drug store — it is open all night — as a casual customer. If no one sees you so much the better. If there should be anyone but the clerk there, buy a cigar and sit down and smoke it. You are expected and will be taken care of. Say nothing until you are spoken to.

"Meanwhile, Mose will leave this house by way of the alley and recover the automobile and drive back. When once you have passed through the little drug store, you are safe. What will come then, I leave to your imagination to picture. Mandell went that way."

Like a flash the whole scheme came to Standing and he looked as intelligent as his new guise would permit. "No one but a genius could have thought of this," he said enthusiastically.

"Thank you. When you are ready to go from there, ample funds will be provided — ample enough to take you anywhere and give you a practical start."

Standing made a gesture of protest. "That is too much. I — "

"Take it as a loan if you will, but take it you must. There are wonderful opportunities in South America for a man with your knowledge of Spanish and your general education and natural ability and a little ready money. Now you had better be going. Write when you have found yourself. And may God be with you always."

Standing seemed unwilling to speak the last word. Even the stain on his face could not hide his emotion. He bowed his head and raised both hands in an attitude of veneration.

"I cannot tell you how I feel. I am too full of shame and my own guilt. You have given me the privilege of becoming a man. No one else could do it.

"There is a safe in my apartments with money in it that does not belong to me. Mrs. Collins' necklace is there also. That knife — pardon me for telling this — did not belong to me. I don't know where Etta got it. It was her own act, but I drove her to it and accepted the blame. Tonight, I have been thinking of my promises to my mother. God have mercy upon me and bless you forever."

Before Mortell could reach his hand he was gone.

. . . . . .

An hour later, Mortell strolled leisurely upstairs.

"Where in the world have you been all this time?" Mrs. Collins demanded, rushing up to him.

"Who — I?" he repeated, rubbing his eyes. "Why, I've been asleep, I guess."

"Asleep?" she echoed, "and what did you do with that terrible Carson or Standing as he called himself? Mr. Bellamy told us you were putting him through the Third Degree and Mose was standing guard until the officers could get here."

"Well, I'll be darned. That's cheerful of friend Bellamy. He has altogether too much confidence in my ability. It's a fine slam on me, isn't it? Do you know, that devil must have drugged me. I remember telling Mose to take the machine and give some of his colored friends an airing. I was drowsy the last time he came and I suppose he thought I was drunk — but Carson — where is he?"

Mrs. Collins was dumbfounded. "Why, don't you know?" she stammered.

Mortell yawned and rubbed his eyes again. "Lord, no," he replied with provoking stupidity. "Don't you folks know?"

Bellamy was terribly embarrassed. Everyone talked at once. Someone telephoned to the police, another rushed to the street and shouted for help. The plain clothes men were invited to search the house, and a detail of uniformed policeman repeated the process, but not a trace of Carson was to be found. Many theories were offered to explain his escape. The Captain decided he must have made his way from a side window in the second story across a trellis covered with vines that formed an arbor with the high brick wall which separated Bellamy's yard from his neighbor's; but he could not forego the pleasure of another dig at the plain clothes men.

"I want to be there when the Chief has his little talk with you boys in the morning. He will probably ask if you didn't know there was a yard around this house.

"But — we will get him yet," he declared, turning around as he followed his men down the front steps.

"Absolutely," Mortell agreed with an encouraging smile — "not," he finished under his breath.

CHAPTER XX.

The Sick Man

TO HELP a well known hospital reduce its debt and maintain its large number of free beds, a great charity concert was to be given in the Auditorium. Famous musicians donated their services and, in deference to its religious affiliations, the programme was to be concluded with an address by a noted and eloquent church celebrity.

The advance sale was wonderful and some of the boxes brought fabulous prices. The night was ideal and the house was sold out and many people turned away, but the best people of Chicago were there. The programme was excellent and went without a hitch until — it came time for the Bishop's address, and the Bishop was not present. Then somebody remembered that he had overlooked the Bishop's sudden indisposition. The musicians had left the stage and the audience was waiting with tantalizing patience. Something had to be done and done quickly. It was. A prominent citizen — it happened to be the Mayor himself — stepped out upon the stage.

"One Sabbath afternoon," he began in a peculiarly personal tone, "how many years ago, I hesitate to relate, a youth, strolling aimlessly along the main highway of an unimportant little city, found his progress suddenly arrested by a mob that swooped down unexpectedly upon him from a side street. Less terrified than curious, he caught the arm

of an acquaintance and inquired the occasion for so much excitement.

" 'Gee, don't you know?' his unwilling informant protested, redoubling his efforts to free himself, 'that Old Bixby has just passed a law to stop baseball on Sunday, and the coppers are at the Park?'

"Mr. Bixby, it is needless to explain, was a lawyer, and active in the law and order ranks.

"Such is the majesty of the law which, in the blind faith of us poor uninformed laymen, can invest even so inconspicuous an exponent as this country lawyer with a power so fearful and complete. For, Ladies and Gentlemen; I am the terrified youth of so many Sundays past; and when a few minutes ago, I was invited to suggest a substitute for our eloquent Bishop, denied to us by an illness which I am happy to state is not serious, my boyhood's faith and enthusiasm asserted itself again, and I have called for the lawyer.

"The lawyer is here but without a speech or even a subject. So I suggested one and he has accepted it: — 'The Sick Man.' I appreciate that to an average individual this situation might be one of concern, but not to a lawyer — to Chicago's most resourceful lawyer — Mr. Ralph Mortell."

Mortell made a magnificent appearance as he faced those five thousand cheering people. Helen Verban sat with her friends, equally surprised and uneasy. Mortell stepped forward nearly to the edge of the stage, composed and confident, sweeping the vast throng with unswerving black eyes, a splendid, handsome, and brilliant man. He caught Helen's eyes — she knew he was looking for her, and no longer doubted his strength.

He alluded in a few happy words to the extravagance of his introduction, making humble apology for the presumption which brought him there to replace the great Bishop. Then he launched into his subject at once.

"Life is the rainbow of eternity, full of brilliant colors, flashing up and out with birth at one end and death at the other, each equally mysterious and inconceivable. Although we cannot solve the mystery of life, we can hope to learn better what to do with it.

"What is the greatest triumph of the ages? The poet answers love, the painter art, and the philosopher our civilization. I am sure the sick man is the greatest triumph of the ages. For years, it had been taught that the higher development of modern people is due to the sacrifice of the weak and the survival of the fittest, and philosophers have made of this a social paradox wherein the weakling is condemned as being dangerous to the strong.

"To-day, our medical colleges are full of the science of preventive therapeutics. Statisticians teach us that already life has been lengthened twelve years; and to nurse the sick man, to save the babies who once perished from improper feeding, and to prolong every possible life is true economy for the race. Scientists with big hearts and big minds have proven that every second of everybody's life is dependent upon the health and comfort of everybody else, and a man in Chicago may not be safe while there are dangerous bacteria destroying his brothers on the other side of the earth. There is a plant familiar to the gardeners of our country which, left alone, droops and withers upon the ground, but when planted near another of its kind, the two twine their tendrils about each other and rise in sturdy

growth, supported by a mutual strength. Man is like that plant.

"Take another lesson from nature if you will. The most productive grain, the most beautiful flower, and the most luscious fruit are cultivated products, made what they are by the hand of man. Is this the survival of the fittest? Can you say that Burbank, the wizard of growing things, produces the survival of the fittest? Without the hand of man, the choicest seed will soon degenerate. This is also true of the human species. Prize babies are babies upon whom the most painstaking care is lavished.

"So, to-day, we are, many of us, the best of us, the survival of the unfit. Modern medicine is pointing that way, and some future physician will convince all the various people of this earth of that supreme ideal that the whole world is one family.

"Ladies and Gentlemen: — I am not a physician of medicine but dating from the announcement of this subject, I intend to hold myself as a physician of the law. For, mind you, the law should be curative. There is another sick man whom I wish to speak of. A celebrated physician has pronounced his ailments, the 'Diseases of Society.'

"It is but a few years since our pious forefathers tried to pound the Devil out of their insane. Now we know it is disease and not the Devil who is to blame. To-day some of our medical brothers affirm that disease and not the Devil is responsible for crime, that crime is due to physical infirmities, and is as contagious as any other disease.

"In the brain of the highest type of man, the seat of reason and intelligence is also the seat of inhibition to the more purely physical instincts and impulses. The moral man is not without criminal instincts but has developed a

greater power of resisting them. Thus in the great field of moral sickness we have need for preventive therapeutics. Punishment for crime is not preventive therapeutics. I tell you as a lawyer, that if everyone were convicted of a first offence and punshed in the usual way, there would be fewer law abiding citizens. Boys caught in their first offence and thrust into the society of confirmed criminals leave prison, shorn of their youthful hope and enthusiasm, bitter toward successful men and women, and ambitious only to profit by the instruction of their dangerous associates.

"The cloud of the prison wall seldom breaks. In Michigan, not long ago, the sister and brother-in-law of a convict were murdered and no clue was discovered of the murderer. This convict should have been liberated before but, thanks to some delay in the legal machinery of the state, was still in prison. Will you deny that had he been at liberty, his pernicious past history would have gone far toward arousing suspicion and quite likely have convicted him of a crime of which he was innocent?

"Some assert that once started, God Himself is quite powerless to change the operation of the laws which His Own Hand has created. Then why should we expect more of the criminal whose future is foreordained by a bad ancestry? Society must accept its share in the guilt of the criminal, and a conscience that looks ahead will be the greatest protection against a class which we are compelled to fear.

"Opportunity and luck have been the dispute of time. Heredity and environment have made two schools among scientists. Nevertheless, the position we occupy in life depends upon the consent of others. Human life, like the brook, becomes stagnant when it ceases to flow. We can

not lock ourselves in without locking the world out. We are all Pharisees and flatter ourselves. But we are never individuals when alone. Mount Everest is only high enough to be highest. Great men are only great enough to be greater and good men only good enough to be better.

"One of the features of the San Francisco Exposition was a troupe of wonderfully trained lions, whose subjugation was so complete that they obeyed the slightest nod of their trainer. During an evening performance, some accident in the power house shut off the current; and when the lights flashed on again almost immediately, the spectators were horrified by the sight of the woman's body lying mangled and lifeless in the midst of thoroughly savage beasts. The education of these animals had not provided for the turning off of the lights. Can we not apply this lesson to our civilization?

"We have done well in medicine. Let us do better in law. We need physicians and hospitals to treat the diseases of society. We need quarantine rather than punishment. We need some of that hard, common sense which has shown the farmer it pays to spend time and money on soil and crop improvement, and the live stock grower that it pays to breed fine stock. Will the world never learn that it pays to raise fine men and women?

"I beseech you, comfortable ladies and gentlemen, to think of the man who is down. It ever he rises, you must lift him. You can do it, and it will surely be true economy for the race. God has given us the privilege of raising our own level. We can change the old law; that 'the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the sons even unto the fourth generation.' We can do more with ourselves than with plants and animals.

"When hatred for the wrongdoer gives place to sympathy, this mystery will vanish. Eternal trying will re-educate and redeem this child in intellect though man in stature. Some high minded men and women are working for him. The future is hopeful. A greater boon than the discovery of anaesthesia or of antisepsis is coming — the cure of this other sick man whom we, in our willful obtusion, persist in miscalling 'the criminal.' "

CHAPTER XXI.

A Role Incarnate

HELEN did not miss a word of Mortell's speech, though some of the time her eyes were full of another scene — a stuffy, little court room, crowded with curious, unsympathetic, court loungers; and another attorney, struggling with a disagreeable lisp, so conscious of his own repulsiveness, that he was afraid to look at his audience. A very attentive little group sat in her box. Occasionally she stole a glance at Bellamy and, now and then, she swept the whole auditorium, and knew that those five thousand people were taking the speaker at his own word and were for him.

How natural! Wherever he went people were for him. Shading her eyes, she sought coolly to analyze the source of his magnetism. Was it a splendid physique? a strong face? a musical voice? a pose? a trick or artifice of the actor? No. These might help but she was sure it must be his own confidence in himself; and confidence comes when the world permits it; and she was sure the world would always be good to him and let him have his own way.

She thought of her relations with him; and there was little chance for philosophy, for where love enters, all cold reasoning must leave. Their "business" meetings had become a routine. It was remarkable, the amount of business the attorney could think of. Could folks make a business

of love or love of business. Helen smiled self consciously. Their business had been love from the first.

It was quite a time before her crowd could get to Mortell, so many people wanted to shake hands with him, but finally she had the hero to herself. His triumph seemed her own. Bellamy probably suggested something to the others. No one was hungry. Osborne had to rush home to look up a point of law, the girls had an early date in the morning with their dentist, and Bellamy, himself, had to discuss something uninteresting with his father, just returned from the southern part of the state. But if there were any conspiracy neither Helen nor Mortell realized it.

It was early Autumn, cool enough to make Mortell's big limousine very comfortable. The night was still. The big man at her side kept squeezing Helen's hand and neither spoke. The car was full of the odor of sweet peas; it was always there when she rode with him.

They sat together on a huge divan, the only conscious beings in a sleeping household. Mortell began to puzzle her right away. He leaned forward resting his elbows upon his knees, serious and uncertain.

"I met more people to-night," he said, suddenly straightening up, "than my predecessor did in all his life."

Helen was too surprised to answer. He was his usual assertive self again, but there came instantly that frank, appealing, boyish light to his eyes that was always there when he spoke to her of love.

"To-night is my night," he murmured.

Helen laid her hands upon his shoulders, looking straight into his wonderful eyes. "You were splendid. I am so proud of you, big man," she told him.

He caught a dimpled little hand and pressed it to his lips.

"You must tell me now, you must answer that question I asked you so long ago."

She drew the big man to her and kissed him upon the lips.

"You big goose," she laughed, "it was only a few weeks ago. You know the answer anyway — because — don't you see how terrible I have been acting if — it — were not going to be yes, all the time?"

He drew her head upon his shoulder. He would not trust his eyes. "And if I should tell you that during these two years I have lived a lie, and to-morrow must go away without a word of explanation to anyone?"

She surprised him by her calmness. "I would go with you," she said without looking up.

"Or that, somewhere, in my past, is a stain, perhaps?"

She turned upon him with incredulous, refusing, eyes. "I would look at you as I am looking now, and know it could not be."

"But if it were?" he persisted.

She nestled her head again.

"I would go with you, anyway, anywhere," she simply said.

His hand tightened on her own. They had gone beyond the reach of words and looked dreamingly ahead. She was the first to break the silence and her manner was startling and aggressive.

"There is no stain, my big beau, and you have not lived a lie during these two wonderful years. You have lived as you had a right to live and it's nobody's business but your own."

His head came up with a jerk and he pushed himself back to the end of the divan. "What — do — you — mean?" he asked in unfeigned astonishment.

"That I've known you all the time."

"All the time?" he repeated, incredulously. There was no denying his disappointment, and he looked so miserable that she hastened to assure him.

"Well, ever since you began making love to me." She forced a laugh. "You were so green, you know, that I was sure it could be no one else. You did fool me at first. I thought you were an actor, a brilliant young genius, who flashed upon the stage, to retire from a regretful public when a rich uncle left him four million dollars down in New Orleans. The resemblance was striking and your story fitted into the idea nicely, but your awful love making betrayed you."

Mortell only shook his head and sighed. Then two plump, little arms stole about his neck.

"I thought —" he muttered, utterly hopeless, "why — everyone will know me, and I'll have to begin all over again."

She shook him playfully and ruffled his hair. "Of course not, you big goose — because —" now for the first time she began to appear concerned, "because you aren't going to make love to anyone else, are you?"

Her question was magical. He held her from him at arm's length. She was as serious as could be. He laughed like a big boy and smothered her with kisses.

"Do you know what you are?" he finally asked.

She shook her head wonderingly.

"You are a real fairy, little girl; and if the price of my

security is what you declare it to be, I am going to convince you at once that I am safe."

"Oh, dear," she cried as soon as she could get her breath, "next time, you must just tell me about it."

He caught her again. "That's just what I can't do, sweetheart. But why didn't you say something to me?"

She looked into his deep, black eyes and smiled. "I don't believe many people tell you what you don't want to hear."

He shook his head deprecatingly. "Am I that fierce?"

She looked into his eyes again, fearlessly. "Not fierce, my big beau, but so terribly sure of yourself." She would not permit him to demur. "There was another better reason. I realized what a splendid thing you were doing. I knew it was the only way. I knew it was safe. I was interested, too, in watching you play the part with your own technique. Never before was there such a play. It is as though Edwin Booth were reincarnated into a living Hamlet. You are the incarnation of a role. No one will question you. Fred Bellamy has seen to that."

She hurriedly fashioned a wreath from roses which he had, that day, sent her; and placed it upon his head.

"I salute thee, first actor of all time, who alone hath found a part and grown into it, and made it thyself."

Not all in play did she say it, and not all in play did he receive it. There was a spell upon them — the spell of hope and love.

"Listen, sweetheart," he said in a voice of reverence, "this *is* my night. Some other time, we can talk about my physical and mental transformation —"

"Oh, I know more than you think. I was down there on the South Side —"

"Did Doctor Gordon —"

"He didn't tell me a thing," she interrupted, "but I can see and put a few things together."

Mortell was a study of conflicting emotions, among which, doubt was ascendant. "That's just the trouble," he objected. "Others will go down there and see and put a few things together."

"They will not go there with my eyes," Helen protested, positively. "Please do not disappoint me. I know you are brave, my big beau. We will be so happy here. Just we two, sweetheart."

Hope was ascendant again. "I do not want to give up," Mortell assented, "but I — Oh, well, I simply cannot explain things to everyone."

"No one will ask you a thing," Helen insisted, stamping her foot for emphasis, and looking as severe as she could. "You can have anything you want here if only you go on as you have been, and do not weaken. Now kiss me, my big man, and do not talk that way, any more."

Helen's suggestion did the big man much good, and his courage mounted with each kiss. "I must see Fred, yet, to-night," he told her, apologetically. "To-night is my night. To-morrow, we will know what to do."

They marched to the door like two stately players in a drama.

"There will be no unnecessary revelations to an unquestioning world, my big man," she insisted. "I know Fred will tell you so."

CHAPTER XXII.

Mortell Decides to Stay

MORTELL found Bellamy in bed. "I'm awfully sorry to rout you out, this way, old man," he apologized.

Bellamy rubbed his eyes, yawned once or twice, and smiled.

"The pleasure is mine, dear chap. I'm sure it's more trouble for you to call than for me to get up."

Mortell rubbed his own eyes. Yes, there stood his friend in lounging robe and slippers, with his ruddy face and inseparable smile as inviting as ever.

Mortell shook his head helplessly.

"What's the matter?" Bellamy asked with some concern.

"Your philosophy is beyond me, Fred. You are unique among men — you never will learn how to complain nor forget how to smile."

"You are sentimental to-night, old dear."

"Perhaps I am, Fred. It has been a wonderful night."

Bellamy raised a hand in protest. "The night is only beginning, dear fellow, and —"

He passed to a door. Hamlet lumbered in, almost precipitating his master in the effort, knocked a couple of chairs over with his expressive tail, and settled down in perfect adoration, poking his big, cold nose into Mortell's welcoming hand. Bellamy turned around.

"Do you know why I like you, Ralph?" he asked with a tender light on his ruddy face.

"Can't imagine," Mortell replied, busy with his canine admirer.

"Because you like my dog. Jack never comes here without grumbling about him."

Mortell looked up and smiled. "I believe it was Mark Twain who said: — 'The more I see of men, the better I like dogs.' "

Bellamy returned directly with a tray loaded down with sandwiches and a steaming pot of cocoa. "I never felt less like sleeping in all my life, old man. We will have a good smoke after this, and a — visit."

When they came to the cigars, Hamlet was sleeping soundly at the feet of the household's friend.

Bellamy drew in a long puff and looked challengingly at his companion. "I believe it was General Grant who said: — 'I can't talk without smoking.' "

Mortell leaned toward him somewhat anxiously. "That reminds me. I want you to congratulate me, Fred."

"I did. You distinguished yourself again."

"Not that. I am going to be married, soon."

Bellamy looked very superior as he held out his hand. "So am I. So is everybody."

"Everybody?"

"Well, Jack has been taken into the firm and cannot stand the raise alone. Margery is ready to try her 'How to keep well' knowledge on me. Young Doc. is making skads of money and Etta has forgotten the past; and —"

Mortell wrung his host's hand hard enough to congratulate the three men concerned. Bellamy groaned and

finished his sentence, "and the barn goes up somewhere in Evanston, the Major admitted."

After a few small efforts, their conversation ran itself out. Mortell sank farther into his chair, pondering over something in the cloud of tobacco smoke which he was blowing across his big black cigar. Bellamy knew something was coming and waited patiently.

At last, Mortell arose, turned around uncertainly, and began walking about the room, with hands clasped behind him and stooping over like a man who is searching for words to express himself. Suddenly, he wheeled in front of his guest. Bellamy never saw him look that way before. There was a new expression on his handsome face, intense but uncertain, almost fearful.

"Fred," he began with dramatic abruptness, "to-night is my night. To-morrow — may not be mine. I have come to ask you something just as I did two years ago when you took me in and I made you a proposition. The time has come for an accounting. Have I made good as I promised I would?"

Bellamy leaped to his feet, dancing about, chuckling, slapping his solemn guest on the back, and making the impressive situation appear quite grotesque. "Have you made good?" he repeated. "Have you? Why, man, you've been performing miracles, that's all."

Mortell could not hide his own pleasure but his manner changed little as he continued.

"During these two years, I have been permitted to live in my own way. Have you ever considered, Fred, that for this privilege, I am indebted solely to you?"

Bellamy shook his head protestingly. "Nothing of

the kind," he insisted. "You never needed my boost at all. You would get through anywhere, without help."

"I know better. The start is everything. I have not been loyal to you. I am a conceited ass, that's what; and now I know, when I realize how unnecessary it was, that I have insulted your intelligence also."

Bellamy tried to stop him.

"I thought I could fool you —"

"You surely did, too." Bellamy seemed easier for the admission. "I was sure you were a certain actor turned lawyer, until I took the trouble to learn that Mr. Actor was still in New Orleans, trying to spend the four millions a rich uncle left him; and you know the old truism that a body cannot occupy more than one space in a given time."

Mortell looked at him challengingly. "But you know me now?"

Bellamy turned redder than ever but managed to answer. "I might make a good guess."

Mortell dropped dejectedly into a chair.

"Standing knew me. Helen knew me. You knew me. Everyone will see through my thin disguise. How am I to set myself right again, after these years of stupid duplicity? I never can face it."

Bellamy went over and laid his hands on Mortell's drooping shoulders.

"Listen to me," he said. "Your disguise is not thin. It just happens to be so thick that no one else is going to see through it. People see what they look for. Standing hated and feared you. He carried your old likeness with the bitter memory of the terrific thrashing you gave him. Helen was your old playmate and loved you. Had you come to me with any other history than one of my own making — I

cannot understand yet why you didn't — had you met me incidentally and taken a slower road to my intimacy, I would never have questioned your identity."

Mortell was taking courage. Indeed, he looked quite aggrieved when he asked: — "Why didn't you say something? It seems to me you were as deceitful as myself to keep silent so long."

"Why say anything? Whose business was it but your own? Then, I happened to have sense enough to realize that there was nothing else for you to do. I gave you credit for thinking of it. The boldest stroke is the safest, as you have said. The individual is superior to the mob. A mob of peccaries will attack a leopard or a lion, but peccaries are animals. No mob of men would attack a John L. Sullivan, in his prime, without a club or a brick or a shot gun, because men look each other in the eye; and no one is going to look you in the eye, and ask if you are not some one else. Now there is Standing — he cannot look a man in the eye. By the way what did you do with him?"

Mortell studied his friend closely before replying.

"I sent him to Gordon. The doctor did a good job." His eyes never left Bellamy's face as he continued with greater assurance. "I was wondering if you were trying to string me. Do you remember the tall chap who ran into you as you were entering my office the other night, and you —"

Bellamy gasped. "You don't say so."

"That was Standing."

Bellamy drew a long breath. "Well, I'll be struck by a tornado, some day, and never know it. What did the doctor do to him?"

"Gordon calls it plastic surgery, I believe," Mortell replied, happy at last over his friend's discomfiture.

"But Gordon doesn't make a practice of disguising criminals, I hope?"

"Not at all. I had to beg hard. No, indeed. Gordon is on the square. I was his first patient. He is —"

"Go on. Tell me all about it, about your own case, I mean."

"Doctor Gordon has written my case up for me in scientific language, but I'll tell it to you in my own words. He had dropped a hint once or twice but I never encouraged him to go into details. I did not have much faith in his surgical ability, anyway. I never dreamed the outcome could be what it is. After my encounter with Standing, I was ready for anything. My mind was made up while in my office after leaving Standing's apartments. I was sure I couldn't look any worse after Gordon would get through with me than before, and the ordeal meant safety for me and time to think.

"The whole thing was simple enough. He employed local anaesthesia all through the work and hurt me more or less, mostly more. My lower jaw is prominent now, and was prominent when that shell came sailing my way in Port Arthur. It was fractured, you know. I was about eighteen years old at the time so that the jaw was fully formed. There was a fibrous union of the bones. Gordon injected cocaine inside, freed the ends of the bones, reset them, and held them in place with dental splints and wires. It healed nicely. Gordon would not allow me to look into a mirror until my jaw was solid. It was a wise precaution. It would never have held against my excitement. My God, man, how it changed my appearance." Mortell was shaking with

emotion. "My jaw had been driven onto my neck and now I began to look a little like a human being again.

"The cut in the lip was easier for Gordon than for me. I did not take any solid food for two weeks. Gordon used a special suture that leaves practically no scar; so you see I can keep my hirsute adornment, which I don't like at all, closely cropped.

"He straightened my nose by working from the mucous surfaces — inside, I mean; no scar to that. If you look closely enough, you will observe a little mark behind each ear; but the lines are hidden by the natural fold of the skin there, and you would have to handle the ears to observe them.

"I gained about twenty-five pounds, which I have not been able to get rid of since. That helped to change my appearance a little. My eyebrows were somewhat bushy, and Gordon removed a couple of rows with the electric needle. I was troubled with dandruff, and my hair was commencing to thin out. Gordon fixed that. The tonic darkens my hair a little. It's the resorcin, I believe.

"I put that card in the *Journal* with honest intentions. I had a wonderful scheme — wanted to see what a fellow with the proper qualifications could do up here among the elite. I — pshaw! what's the use of going into that? I am filled with shame whenever I think of what I had in mind then; but I was bitter against everybody and wanted revenge; and that was before Gordon started working on me.

"Well, I went to New Orleans. No one with the proper qualifications answered my card in the *Journal,* so I came here to see what I could see. I had no well laid plans of any sort. I was not sure of myself either; but when my old office girl failed to recognize me, a wild idea came

to me at once. Why not try to fill the place, myself, my new self?

"I was glad to meet you at Rector's that night. In fact, I went there for that purpose. I was afraid, too, but I wanted to test my disguise, and you played into my hands very nicely. I just drifted along, not certain that you did not recognize me, but determined not to betray myself. I was delighted when you permitted me to announce my name; and I selected Mortell because that was about the only thing I had foreseen — the name. I had thought of practicing again; or, at least, to profit by any advantage that might come from announcing myself as an attorney; and, as you know, the rules of practice, now-a-days, make it pretty difficult to qualify; so by changing three letters in my old credentials, I could turn the trick and make use of my old certificates. In a word, I forged my own name."

He paused and looked inquiringly at Bellamy.

Bellamy winked knowingly. "I can lay claim with perfect truthfulness to having discovered your motive, the minute I decided upon your identity; but continue."

"When you invited me to reveal myself, next morning, you put me in a hole, but I was convinced that you did not know me, after all. What was I to do? I had been very indiscreet. I did some rapid thinking. I thought you would recognize me sooner or later, and meanwhile, I could have a little fun with you. That was the weak link in my chain — accepting a ready-made history from you. From the standpoint of having fun with you, I mean. The proposition which I made you must convince you, now, how greatly I needed you and how absolutely I trusted you. I knew you would never betray me without warning. How unnecessary was my deceit! How much more honorable, had I come out

boldly; but it may be that a new destiny over which I was not always master, led me on."

"Of course, it did," Bellamy agreed. "There was nothing wrong in your conduct. You followed the lines of least resistance; that's all."

Mortell wrinkled his brow and looked reflectively from one corner of the room to another. "I am glad you are so magnanimous."

"Magnanimous nothing," Bellamy snapped. "A fellow has to be a sport, hasn't he?" he asked, impatiently. "Go on."

Mortell wrinkled his brow again.

"Standing was not long in taking my measure; but I was fortunate enough to be able to turn him from an enemy into a friend. I am glad of that."

Bellamy chuckled self-consciously and shook his head admiringly. "We have to give it to you again. I would have made a mess of such a situation. You certainly took a long chance at the rehearsal, though."

"I had a purpose. That was a challenge to all of you. I wanted to learn if anyone else did question my identity."

Bellamy shook his head again. "You're a deep one."

Mortell smiled. "You are an awful Blarney, Fred. But to get back to Standing; he could have remained here safely enough, but didn't want to do so. You can readily imagine why. He has a splendid command of the Spanish language. In a year or two, there will be another lawyer in Buenos Aires. I have loaned him a few dollars, for he insisted upon making good his shortcomings; and strangely enough, it will be possible to turn enough business his way to get him nicely started. He will make good."

"I am sure he will," Bellamy echoed. "I don't care

how scientists explain, or philosophers argue, there is an eternal equation in nature, and a generous deed is never wasted."

Mortell accepted the praise without protest. For a few minutes he was silent. Then he turned anxiously to his friend. "What more can I tell you? You know the rest. What have you to say?"

Bellamy had more to do than to say. "Now that scientific description of your operation — where might it be?" he asked.

Mortell twisted uneasily and looked uncomfortable as he drew out a dozen pages of typewritten paper, folded to fit an inside coat pocket, crumpled and soiled from much handling and carrying about; and handed them to his friend.

Bellamy ran his eyes over the first page.

"You have not taken good care of this. I suppose Gordon has a copy?"

Mortell snapped his fingers. "He has not. He promised not to write a word about it for publication. He doesn't need the advertising. You are mistaken if you think I have not taken good care of it. I have taken too good care of it. It has been on my person every minute since I was slugged. I didn't want anyone else to get it."

"Then this document is the only tangible evidence of your transformation?"

Mortell nodded.

Bellamy had been moving about the room during his examination of the document and now leaned against the mantle of the empty fireplace. Before Mortell could divine his purpose, he lighted a match and the pages flashed up in flames.

"Here, wait. What are you doing?" Mortell de-

manded, rushing forward, a helpless witness of the destruction.

"Cremating the remains of one Ralph Mandell," Bellamy dryly replied, letting the blazing sheets fall in a charred mass upon the hungry grate.

He turned upon the puzzled man with a face of prophecy and finality.

" 'Look not mournfully to the past.
It comes not back again.
Go forth to meet the shadowy future with a manly heart.' "

Mortell was unable to speak. He dropped into his big chair again, trying vainly, in a man's way, to hide his feelings. Bellamy turned the lights lower and backed his chair against the fireplace, where, he was determined, the unnecessary fears of his wavering protégé should be forever interred.

"As I told you," he continued with studied emphasis, "my eyes have not been blind. My ear has been to the ground. I have assumed a quiet guardianship over you; for don't you see, in a way, I am your parent, since you are the offspring of my hitherto useless imagination? No one believes your little tale about meeting Mandell in New Orleans. No one believes he ever went there. People give you credit for trying to save his name from the stigma of self destruction, but they are positive he destroyed himself.

"Therefore he is destroyed. He was never necessary. What Gordon did should have been done by the Japanese surgeons. If man be created in the image of his Maker, every scar, every disfigurement, and every deformity is the 'evil that men do living after them.' When beauty and purity do not go together nature lies.

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"Your ordeal was not a mistake nor a waste. When we feel that we are blundering along in our crude fallible way, it may be God's way to teach a wonderful lesson. You have earned the privilege you longed for, to live your own life, and it will be a better and finer life. The world has given its consent. You are doubly assured.

" 'For the Lord seeth not as man seeth,
For man looketh on the outward appearance,
But the Lord looketh on the heart.' "

Mortell tried no longer to hide his feelings. "You are a very persuasive pleader, Fred," he promptly acknowledged.

Thus Mortell accepted the word of his friend, and made his decision in a consistently professional manner.

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